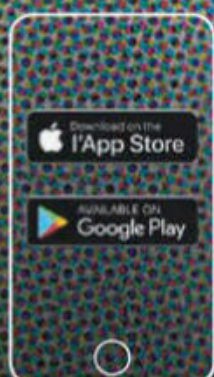


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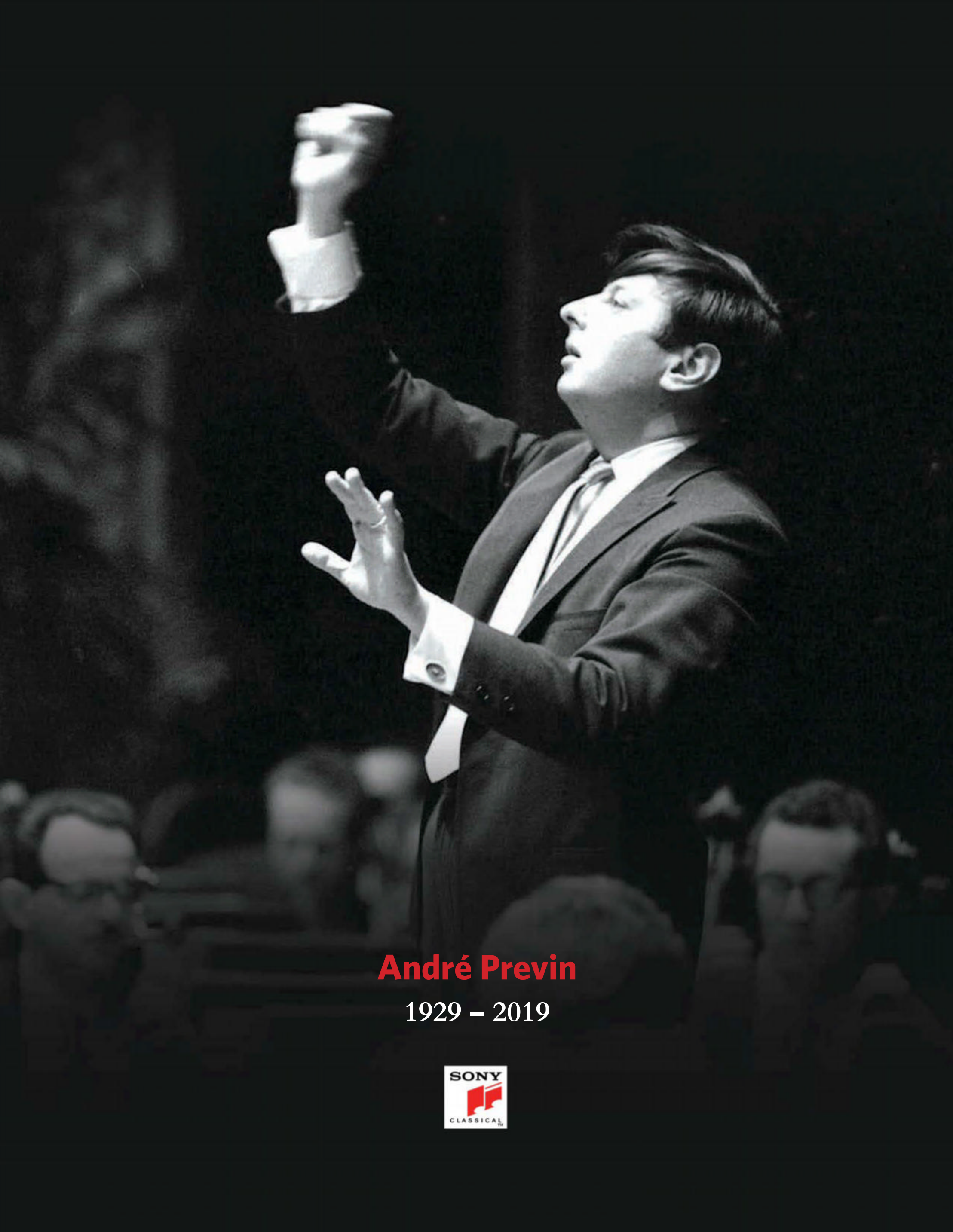
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ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Anderson-Bazzoli

Continent's End

Buffy Baggott *mez* Kevin Korth *pf*

Delos ® DE3567 (33' • DDD • T)



Nearly everything about this disc arrives like a bolt out of the blue. The poet

Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) was quite famous in his own time (also as a playwright and environmentalist of sorts), and it's his earlier, California-inspired verse that's adapted for this nine-song cycle *Continent's End* by Christopher Anderson-Bazzoli (b1969), a seasoned West Coast craftsman (copyist, orchestrator and film score composer) who stakes his claim here as a front-and-centre artist. He composed *Continent's End* by improvising vocal lines to Jeffers's poems, which he then recorded, with piano-writing to follow.

However short the disc (33 minutes), epic qualities abound. The poems are full of quickly shifting imagery conveying a rugged coastal terrain with a belief in survival of the fittest, no matter how cruel it may seem, one poem describing the horrible beauty of wild fires. The opening song, 'Granite and Cypress', sets the tone, with arioso-ish vocal lines unfurling over aggressive arpeggios that are as changeable as coastal weather. The ending is oddly nonchalant but leads well into the following song, 'Natural Music', which characterises 'the old voice of the ocean'. That music is slow, spare and with less defined harmonic direction. Later songs create narrative by developing thematic content gradually, though most often songs are built from alternately lyrical and rhetorical modules that flow together in some instances but also crash up against each other with a poetic juxtaposition that sounds fortuitously accidental.

One of the composer's wittiest inspirations comes from Jeffers's more detached portrayals of mankind, set to music suggesting an extremely busy ant hill. Though not particularly original,

GRAMOPHONE *talks to ...*

Avalon Quartet

The quartet-in-residence at Northern Illinois University discuss their new album of music by Matthew Quayle

What brought the string quartets of Matthew Quayle to your attention?

We were actually hired to play his first two quartets in a concert series, the Washington Square Contemporary Music Society in New York City. We quickly took a liking to this music, which felt fresh and genuine, and when Matthew contacted us later with the proposal to record all of his quartets (which now included the Third Quartet) we immediately agreed.

The musical style is eclectic, from haunting beauty to punchy dissonance - are there particular influences you detect?

Quayle uses many elements of American, often popular, music that surrounded him as he grew up. These works give us a window into his mind and his memories. We feel that his style changes progressively through each quartet, with the Third being possibly the most adventurous.



Indeed, the Third Quartet is very distinctive - how would you describe it?

This work bounces around multiple styles, ranging from rock to computer game music; there is even a quotation of the opening of Bach's D minor Chaconne. One fascinating aspect of this work is that it illustrates what happens to our subconscious in the modern world, when we are surrounded by all kinds of music like never before in history. There is a bit of a stream-of-consciousness element to this quartet, yet the piece is carefully organised and creates a coherent whole. It is also great fun to play!

What are your next recording plans?

We are in the early stages of planning a recording of Florence Price's chamber music, some of which has only been recently discovered.

Anderson-Bazzoli admirably doesn't follow in anybody's footsteps.

Should this cycle take its place alongside, say, Elgar's *Sea Pictures*? Hard to say in this performance because mezzo-soprano Buffy Baggott is severely miscast. Plenty of moments hint at how much she has taken the music into her mind and heart. But rarely does that come out of her voice, which is suited more to Verdi's Amneris than a piece that walks extremely fine lines, ones that are admirably etched by pianist Kevin Korth. Words are indistinguishable for long passages. And that's much of what we're here for. **David Patrick Stearns**

Carpenter

From the Valley of Baca^a.

Piano Sonata^b. String Trio^c

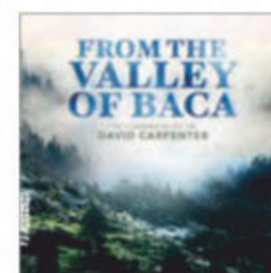
^aLawrence Indik *bar* ^cRebecca Harris *vn*

^cMyanna Harvey *va* ^cCassia Harvey *vc*

^aCharles Abramovic, ^bKatelyn Bouska *pf*

Navona ® NV6208

(66' • DDD • T)



David Owen Carpenter (b1972) was born in Poughkeepsie, NY,

**Michael Jon Fink** *Celesta*

A suite of 12 elegant, transcendent, gem-like celesta solos performed by the composer.

The *Los Angeles Times* has described Fink's music as "LUSTROUS," "METAPHYSICALLY TINGED," and "UNAPOLOGETICALLY TRANQUIL."

LA Weekly has written that his music is "of ETHEREAL SIMPLICITY ... it is distinctly his own."

"[M]usic that is simple, yet ESSENTIAL." (*Sequenza21*)

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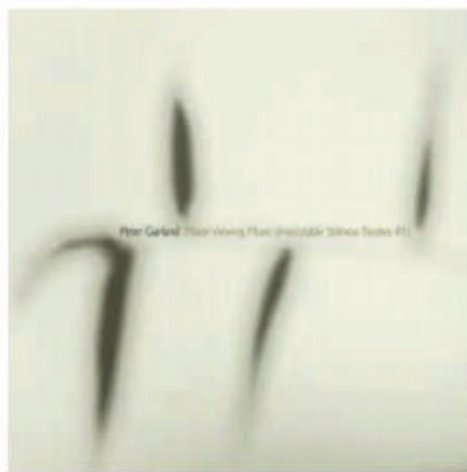
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though is now resident in Philadelphia, and is an alumnus of Bates College, Lewiston, ME, Peabody Conservatory and Temple University, Philadelphia, among other locations. He composes in a millennial free-tonal idiom, looking to the future but unafraid to reference the past, as shown by the earliest work here, the String Trio (2014). It is cast in three compact movements, fast-slow-fast, with more complex internal structures than that suggests. The model, as he concedes in the booklet note, was Shostakovich's Eighth String Quartet, mainly for its range of moods and harmonic language. There are no intended thematic quotes but – unconsciously – one of the main motifs truncates the Russian's motto to E flat-C-B (ie Es-C-H in German notation).

The Piano Sonata (2015) is also in three movements, though it started life as a six-minute Rhapsody to be a recital companion piece for Chopin's Third Piano Sonata. After Katelyn Bouska had premiered it, she requested Carpenter add two further movements to form a sonata. Its neo-romantic manner can be heard as a commentary on 19th-century music and is not intended as a pastiche.

The song-cycle *From the Valley of Baca* (2016) contains nine settings, five of poems by Emma Lazarus, separated by four excerpts from the 84th Psalm in Hebrew (a concept suggested by Lazarus's eponymous poem, which is prefaced by a section of the psalm). Together they form a metaphor of a dispossessed people, whether Lazarus's Jewish contemporaries persecuted in 19th-century Europe or Syrian refugees in 2015. It is a subtle cycle, nicely sung by its dedicatee, Lawrence Indik, lacking only a big standout number or memorable tune. Fine, sensitive performances all round, caught in rather airless recordings made on four separate occasions in late 2017. Definitely worth investigating. **Guy Rickards**

Quayle

String Quartets – No 1;
No 2, 'Sweet Insanity'; No 3

Avalon Quartet

Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559851 (55' • DDD)



Now in his early forties, Matthew Quayle has amassed a catalogue of almost 50 works in a range of genres. Chamber music makes up the largest proportion of

his output, these three string quartets having emerged during just over a decade of creativity.

Interestingly, the First Quartet (2003/05) started as a stand-alone *Andante*, inspired by the recent loss of Quayle's grandmother and whose intense while never inert nostalgia is audibly of the pastoralism to be found in earlier American composers. Its sense of innocence lost (or left in abeyance) is pursued in three movements added two years later: a capricious *Presto*, a second *Andante* whose *serioso* marking indicates its sombre and often agitated expression, then a determined final *Allegro* that rounds off the work in the regretful light of experience.

The Second Quartet (2006) picks up directly on its predecessor, its compact though eventful single movement alternating between direct lyricism and an edgy incisiveness which between them evoke the *Sweet Insanity* of its subtitle (whether there is any covert allusion to Brian Wilson's never-released 1991 album of that name is an intriguing thought). By contrast, the Third Quartet (2016) unfolds as 13 brief vignettes that build into a cohesive whole in spite (or because?) of those abrupt and often dislocated stylistic or emotional contrasts between them.

The Avalon Quartet took part in the premieres of the First and Third Quartets; the conviction they bring cannot be gainsaid. Vividly recorded and thoughtfully annotated (by Quayle himself), this is a welcome introduction to a composer from whom one looks forward to hearing more.

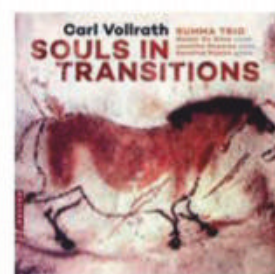
Richard Whitehouse

Vollrath

'Souls in Transitions'

Buddha of the Future. The Secrets of the Magdalenian Caves. Tombs of Ancient Times
Summa Trio

Navona (E) NV6212 (57' • DDD)



Carl Vollrath (b1931) was a new name to me when this delightful disc of piano trios dropped through my letterbox. A New York-born alumnus of Stetson, Columbia and Florida State Universities (1953-64), he taught at Troy University, Alabama, for 40 years from 1965, where at least the first of these trios, the diptych *The Secrets of the Magdalenian Caves*, was composed. In his

brief note, the composer gives no other hint as to when these works were written and there is maddeningly little information about them on the internet.

The trios prove Vollrath is a craftsman as composer, each one an object lesson in how to balance the modern piano with violin and cello. Vollrath's solution is to thin out the keyboard textures so as not to overpower the strings but not overdo it either. The result is attractive, tonal music filled with light and shade.

The descriptive titles came after the music was written, in the case of *The Secrets* through a comment by a Troy colleague that the music 'reminded him of images he had seen of ancient Peruvian cave paintings'. The second trio, *Tombs of Ancient Times* (in three movements), refers to ancient Egyptian burial traditions and became the second in a series 'Souls in Transitions', drawing inspiration from the beliefs of the past. The third, *Buddha of the Future*, is more Janus-faced, inspired by how Buddha has been portrayed previously and wondering how that will change in the future.

Each trio is separate and independent, with its own specific character, for instance in the ticking pizzicatos that open *Tombs* or *Buddha's* march-like finale. Played in sequence as here, they form a coherent larger whole. The Summa Trio, another name new to me, catch the music's energy and evocative qualities very nicely in naturally balanced sound.

Recommended. **Guy Rickards**

'Citizen'

Anonymous Amazing Grace (arr Walden)

Chopin Mazurkas – No 2, Op 6 No 2;
No 13, Op 17 No 4; No 15, Op 24 No 2

Gasser American Citizen **Gross** Locations
in Time **Little** Accumulation of Purpose
Still Summerland **Walden** Sacred Spaces

Bruce Levingston *pf*

Sono Luminus (E) DSL92228 (71' • DDD)

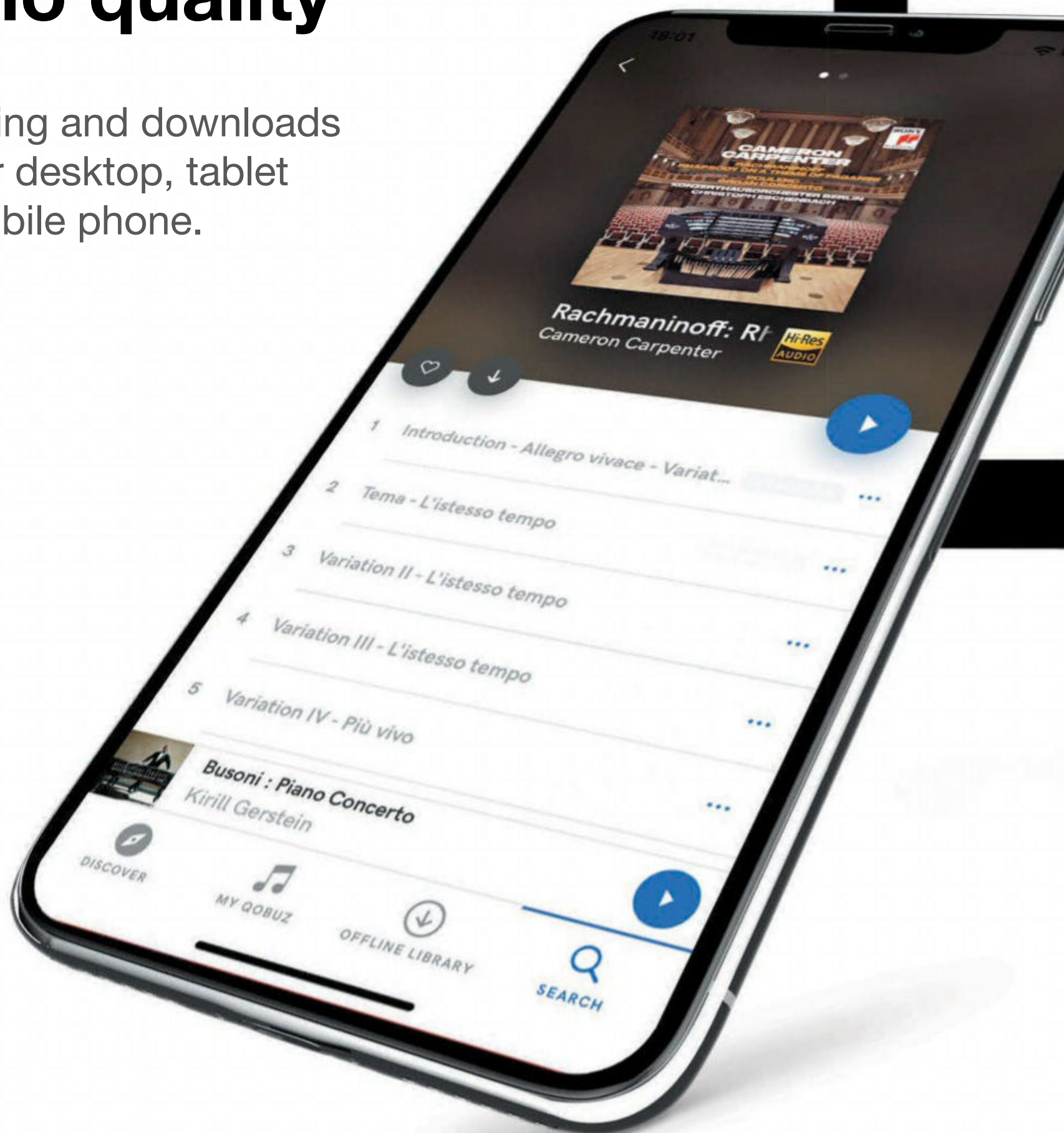


When Bruce Levingston was invited to give a recital for the opening of the Civil Rights museum in his home state of Mississippi, he put together a programme of works purporting to reflect issues of patriotism, citizenship and human rights that seem more contentious and polarising than ever.

It's a strong concept on paper and in theory. Yet do these piano pieces transcend ►

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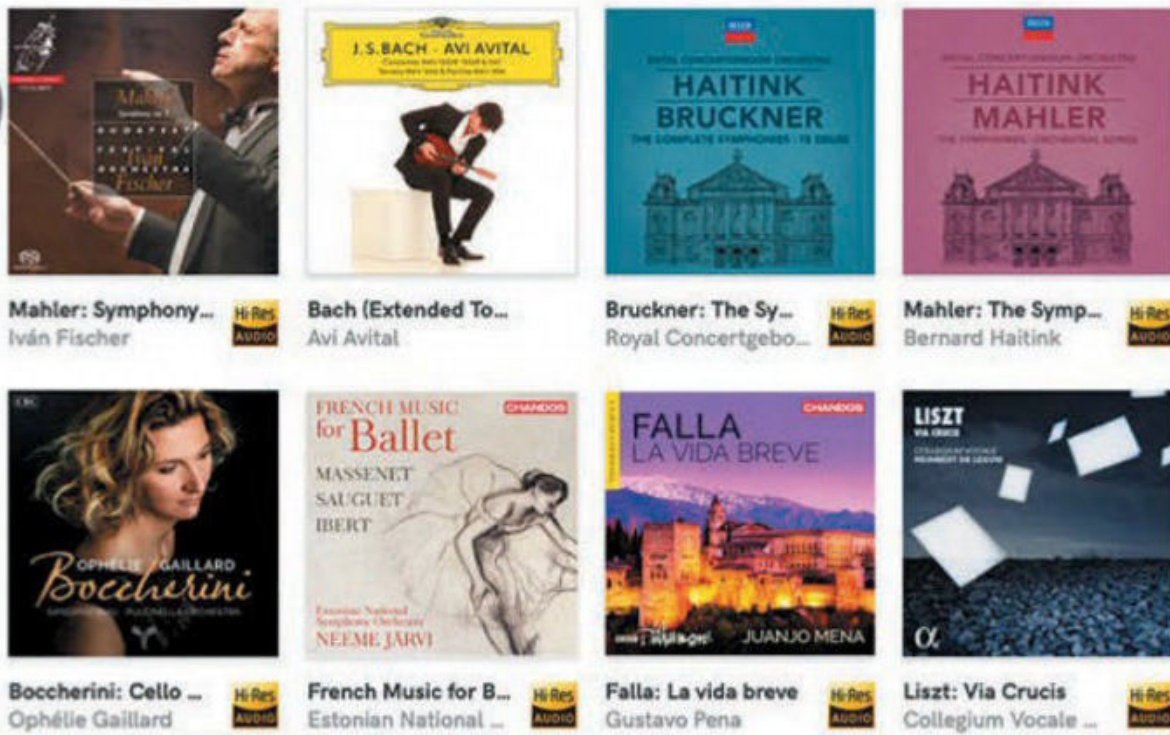




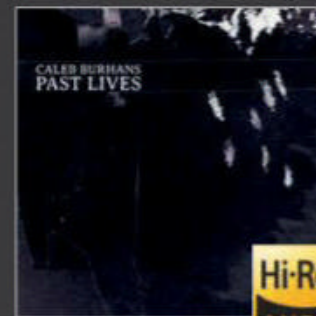
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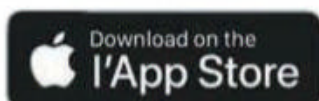
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their programmatic basis in purely musical terms? Not always. For example, Nolan Gasser's *American Citizen* claims to draw conceptual inspiration from Marie Hull's painting of John Wesley Washington and musical inspiration from sources as eclectic as Stephen Foster tunes, ragtime, bebop, blues and Chopin fiorituras. What comes out in the wash, however, is rhapsodic patchwork in the manner of Charles Ives. Yet the neo-Impressionistic harmonic language of William Grant Still's *Summerland* is handled with careful textural deployment and narrative beauty. The music also inspires some of Levingston's most sensitive and polished playing on disc.

In David T Little's suite *Annunciation of Purpose*, I'm intrigued by the 'Ride' movement's percussive high-register clusters set against sustained bass lines, and by the hushed Morton Feldman-like quality of the brief 'Reveille' interludes. The austere and understated lyricism in the outer movements of Augusta Gross's *Locations in Time* are more to my taste than the central Elegy's somewhat saccharine melodic invention. The two C Price Walden pieces are serious and well crafted, with plenty of pillar-like declamatory gestures that (intentionally or not) evoke similar moments in Aaron Copland and Roy Harris. Walden's arrangement of *Amazing Grace* stands out for its gently spread-out bass lines and piquant dissonances. But did Walden write in those dynamic hairpins and ritards at phrase ends, or is that Levingston's doing? I find that these gestures reduce his arrangement's innate gravitas to salon dimensions.

In any case, Levingston's rhetorical underlining throughout the three Chopin Mazurkas crosses that thin line demarcating subjectivity and fussy mannerism. He stretches the A minor Mazurka (Op 17 No 4) out to shapeless and clueless (dis-)proportions in six record-breaking minutes: a far cry from Horowitz's controlled rubato or Paderewski's surprisingly straightforward delivery. Once again, Levingston proves that he plays new music much better than he interprets 19th-century Romantics. **Jed Distler**

'Dream'

'American Music for Electric Guitar'

Cage Dream **Curran** Rose of Beams **Feldman** The Possibility of a New Work for Electric Guitar **D Lang** Warmth **Polansky** An Unhappy Set of Coincidences **Sharp** Mare Undarum **Stiefel** Urutora-man **Vees** Alpha Aloha **Wolff** Another Possibility. Going West

Sergio Sorrentino elec gtr

Mode © MODE301 (67' • DDD)



The art-music repertoire for electric guitar is not extensive, a smattering of concertos aside (not least Fuchs's *Glacier* – Naxos, A/18), restricted primarily to colouristic additions in larger scores by composers from Maderna to McCabe. Sergio Sorrentino's lovingly performed album of shorter American works is a welcome corrective, therefore.

His programme showcases his instrument's expressive capabilities and limitations, however, not least in his precise transcription of Cage's *Dream* (1948). Lacking the piano's depth of tone, lines meander rather than soar; likewise in Alvin Curran's *Rose of Beams* (1997). Jack Vees's *Alpha Aloha* varies the palette with electronic processing through digital filters while David Lang's *Warmth* (2006) adds a second guitar – multitracked by Sorrentino – but the instrument's muddy tone makes it trickier to follow the musical argument than with, say, a pair of violins. Larry Polansky's *An Unhappy Set of Circumstances* (1980) for electric guitar and bass, also multitracked here, is more successful.

Elliot Sharp's quasi-improvisatory *Mare Undarum* uses a 'prepared guitar' using a bottleneck, Blu-tack, chopsticks and some advanced playing techniques. It and Van Stiefel's gentle *Urutora-man* are the pick of the programme, consistently interesting musically. For many, the main attraction will be Feldman's lost *The Possibility of a New Work for Guitar* (1966), given here in Seth Josel's recent reconstruction. Originally composed for Christian Wolff to be played in 'a kind of table-top position', it is fascinating to compare this experimental curiosity with Wolff's own *Another Possibility* (2004) and rather denser *Going West* (2013, for Larry Polansky).

If none of these are quite the masterpieces Sorrentino claims in his booklet notes, there is much of interest. Overall, it is hard to escape the feeling that this is a sampler rather than a real recital. What no one should doubt is the virtuosity of Sorrentino's playing. Mode's sound is very clear and precise, as it needs to be!

Guy Rickards

'Musica incognita'

Bassett Horn Sonata **Bowen** Horn Sonata

Damase Horn Sonata **Sylvan** Horn Sonata, Op 7

Ian Zook hn **Eric Ruple** pf

MSR Classics © MS1676 (58' • DDD)



This is the second programme of music for solo horn (with – as here – or without accompaniment) to have come my way recently from MSR Classics, following hard on the heels of Johanna Lundy's 'Canyon Songs', at the heart of which was a stunning performance of Bach's Partita, BWV1013 (2/19^{US}). Fine player as Ian Zook is – and his CV as laid in the booklet is very impressive – there is no performance here that compares with Lundy's feat of virtuosity, though the four sonatas he plays perhaps militate against such a display.

Nor is Zook as sympathetically recorded as was Lundy, being rather more closely miked, resulting in an occasionally strident and domineering sound. Nonetheless, he and his able accompanist, Eric Ruple, show that each sonata has its moments, particularly in that by the Swedish amateur (and largely self-taught) composer Sixten Sylvan (1914-2001), a physician by profession. A resident of Skåne, that part of Sweden closest to Denmark, Sylvan's Sonata (1963) is straightforward and fluent, with occasional hints of Nielsen. By contrast, the late Sonata (1996) by Jean-Michel Damase (1928-2013), every inch a professional composer, is a much more complex work (harmonically and expressively) than Sylvan's. Both showcase Zook's feeling for line.

Leslie Bassett (1923-2016) studied with Honegger and Boulanger after the Second World War and went on to become a fine composer, especially for wind instruments. His Horn Sonata (1954), recorded for the first time, is the shortest piece here, almost a sonatina at a touch over 11 minutes, but its three elegant movements, fast-slow-fast like the other three sonatas, are arguably the most satisfying. His leaner style makes a very effective contrast with York Bowen's more opulent-sounding E flat major Sonata (1937). Bowen was a horn player himself but wrote this fine piece for Aubrey Brain.

Guy Rickards



Expressive capabilities and limitations: Sergio Sorrentino plays an eclectic range of American music for electric guitar

'A Tribute to Danny Granados'

Brahms Clarinet Quintet, Op 115

Golijov The Man Who Cried - Lullaby and Doina

Piazzolla Allegro tangabile. Libertango.

La muerte de ángel. Milonga para tres

Danny Granados c/ Fidelis Quartet with

Judy Dines fl **Erik Gronfor** db **Pablo Zinger** pf

Delos © DE3562 (64' • DDD)

Recorded 2011



Danny Granados (1964-2018) studied with Robert Marcellus, first

chair clarinet of the Cleveland Orchestra during the Szell years, and embarked on a promising career. Then he left music to earn a business degree, and thereafter worked in marketing and finance.

Granados was Chief Financial Officer of the Houston Symphony Orchestra when he died of cancer last year. This recording, made in 2011 with members of the HSO, gives an idea of just how superbly gifted a musician Granados was.

Indeed, I was completely bowled over by this polished and poetic recording of Brahms's Clarinet Quintet. It's not only Granados's liquid tone that impresses but his judicious use of rubato – his entrance so softly rhapsodic – as well as the way he integrates himself into the ensemble so he never sticks out in a soloistic way. The quartet are marvellous, too. I love the quiet nobility all five musicians bring to the first movement's *Quasi sostenuto* (at 6'55"), for instance, and how in the opening of the *Adagio* their expansive, elastic phrasing seems to erase the beats and

bar lines, so it's as if one were floating in a pool, gently rocked by discrete systems of waves and currents. All the variations of the finale are well characterised but the coda, with its profoundly expressive silences, is particularly poignant.

With its strong Eastern European accent, Osvaldo Golijov's 'Lullaby and Doina' (from his 2001 film score to *The Man Who Cried*) serves as a clever and effective segue to Astor Piazzolla's tangos. Again, Granados is in superb form. His legato in the lyrical sections of *Libertango* and also in the slow introduction to the *Allegro tangabile* are as velvety as melted chocolate. The arrangements are imaginative, and the interpretations – fierce yet refined – are true to the spirit of tango nuevo.

This is a moving tribute as well as a satisfying programme. The Brahms is really quite special. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

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Pictured: Violinist Janine Jansen (DECCA / © Marco Borggreve) who featured on the January 2016 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is \$142.87; print only annual subscription or Digital Edition or Reviews Database (\$101); Digital Club (\$134); Gramophone Club (\$167). If choosing a print option, an addition overseas P+P charge will be added at \$35.75 (Outside EU). If you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com

Growing audiences: on air, in schools, in China

On March 5, the UK's airwaves, digitally speaking, were treated to a new classical music station, Scala Radio. BBC Radio 3's origins lie in the early era of broadcasting while Classic FM, the first commercial classical station, launched some 26 years ago. Scala, another commercial station, now joins them from the same stable as Jazz FM and Absolute Radio, aiming to be a popular and accessible station, but which happens to play classical music. Its most high-profile host, Simon Mayo, has presented some of the top slots on BBC Radios 1 and 2, and the hope must be that many a listener will follow him on his journey. First impressions augur well, the playlist a mix of core works by core artists (Elgar from Sir Andrew Davis, Mozart from Claudio Abbado) with stylish renditions of works borrowed from elsewhere (Radiohead by the choir Voces8 for example). It's similar to the approach pioneered by Classic FM (reaching incredibly impressive audience figures), given a slightly different twist; that someone else is stepping into the same space is as much compliment as challenge.

Not to be outdone, BBC Radio 3 this month announced the saxophonist Jess Gillam as its youngest presenter, hosting a show exploring where classical and other genres meet. But the unveiling this month of the BBC's third round of Ten Pieces, its education programme, also caught my attention. The scheme equips teachers with resources to immerse their pupils in 10 eclectic works; this year's list includes works by Florence Price and Grażyna Bacewicz, composers I'd certainly not heard of when I was at school. And



there's one composer on the list whose music will be familiar to many pupils, whether or not they know his name. Imagine a child's excitement at discovering they'll be among the very first to play a brand-new and specially commissioned piece by Hollywood composer Hans Zimmer?

One thing that unites all the above is something that Edward Seckerson, in his tribute to André Previn, rightly cites as exemplifying that great ambassador's approach to growing audiences: 'You don't reach people with compromises, with gimmicks'. No, you reach them with conviction and imagination.

Which seems very true of China too. As the first recordings emerge from the partnership between the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra under Long Yu (seen on our cover) and DG, it seems like a good time to look afresh at what may well turn out to be the most significant audience-growth story of all. As Andrew Mellor argues in our feature, the excellence of China's artists, the inquisitive passion of its (vast and youthful) audiences, and the growing strength of its own musical voice are all worthy of attention.

And finally, we like to think we do our bit too, by offering a home for objective discussion and advocacy of music-making. The newly published circulation figures for UK magazines revealed that *Gramophone* increased its readership last year, bucking the trend of many titles. My thanks to all of you, our readers, for your ongoing support. I hope this means we're doing something right: but if you feel we're not, my email is below – I'd be genuinely pleased to hear from you.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'The scale of China, and its appetite for classical music, has to be seen to be believed,' writes the

author of this month's cover story, **ANDREW MELLOR**, who visited some of China's major cultural centres for us. 'This is truly a land of contradictions, which makes the story all the more fascinating.'



The most valuable aspect for **ROB COWAN** when he was researching his Collection on Rachmaninov's

Symphonic Dances was, he says, 'questioning the effectiveness of recordings I thought I loved, and recognising the virtues of those I didn't previously know. It was', he continues, 'a privilege indeed.'



'There's nothing more boring than a musician who toes the party line,' says **RICHARD BRATBY**. 'You

don't have to be a cellist to enjoy interviewing an artist as outspoken as Alban Gerhardt, but it was fun to have some preconceptions challenged – and a guilty pleasure to have a few prejudices confirmed!'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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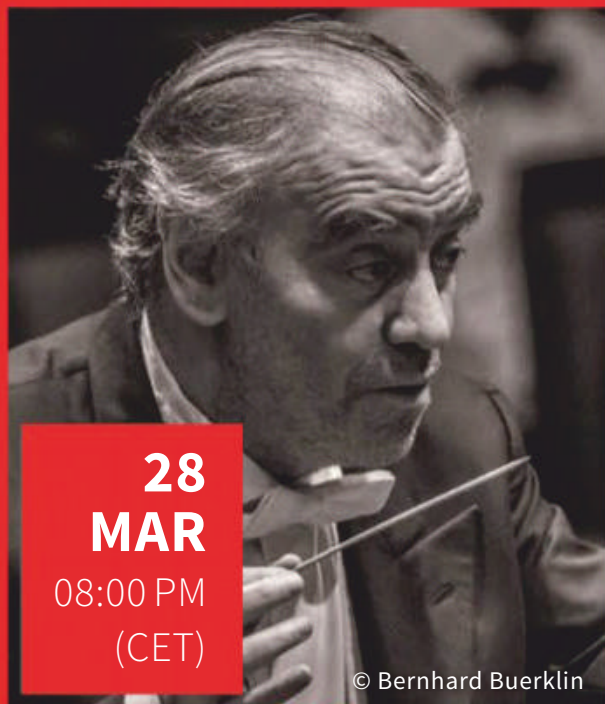
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GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



MAHLER
Symphony No 7
Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer
Channel Classics
► **EDWARD SECKERSON'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 56**

A remarkable addition to Iván Fischer's revelatory ongoing Mahler symphony cycle, the rich and wonderful attention to detail unveiling so much of this work's inner soul.



JS BACH
Violin Concertos
Isabelle Faust *vn*
Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / Bernhard Forck
Harmonia Mundi

Isabelle Faust's Bach is perfectly controlled, both in tone and tempos, everything bursting with a life and liveliness that is utterly delightful.

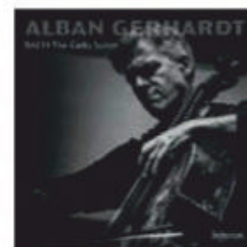
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 58**



MENDELSSOHN
Piano Concertos
Jan Lisiecki *pf* **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra**
DG

These performances of Mendelssohn's piano concertos by Jan Lisiecki, former *Gramophone* Young Artist of the Year, are wonderful, rich in colour (and shade) and virtuosity.

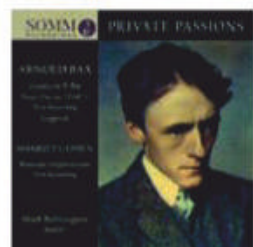
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**



JS BACH
Six Solo Cello Suites
Alban Gerhardt *vc*
Hyperion
As our interview this month reveals, cellist

Alban Gerhardt is quite the freethinking, independent-minded musician – and that's all there in this superb and highly engaging survey of the Bach suites.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



BAX. COHEN
'Private Passions'
Mark Bebbington *pf*
Somm Céleste
Mark Bebbington's musical journeys are

always fascinating – this time he pairs Arnold Bax with some recently discovered pieces by Harriet Cohen, in performances that are full of poetry.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



PROKOFIEV
Piano Sonatas Nos 1 & 2
Lukas Geniušas *pf*
Mirare
The beginning of a promised survey of

Prokofiev's piano sonatas – and what a start. Lukas Geniušas is a truly playful story-teller, his range of expression compelling throughout.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



'INFLUENCES'
Tamara Stefanovich *pf*
Pentatone
An intriguing programme of three 20th-century works

by Bartók, Ives and Messiaen, plus Bach, brilliantly presented by Tamara Stefanovich – elegant, thoughtful, probing, and beautifully recorded.

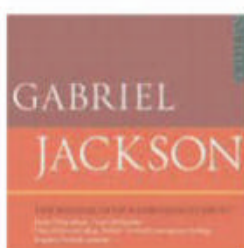
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 92**



ELGAR *Caractus*
Sols; Orchestra of Opera North / Martyn Brabbins
Hyperion
Elgar's early cantata reveals – certainly in

the hands of such a skilled interpreter of his music as Martyn Brabbins – the genius for symphonic sound that was to define his later masterpieces.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**



G JACKSON *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ*
Sols; Choir of Merton College, Oxford / Benjamin Nicholas
Delphian

If last month's in-depth look at Gabriel Jackson's superb new *Passion* piqued your interest, you won't be disappointed: it's a powerful and moving work.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 97**



'L'ALESSANDRO AMANTE'
Xavier Sabata *countertenor*
Vespres d'Arnadí / Dani Espasa *hpd*
Aparté

These Alexander the Great-themed arias wonderfully delve into the themes of power, passion and politics – and how Baroque composers explored them.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 114**



DVD/BLU-RAY
'LIVE FROM THE FORBIDDEN CITY'
Sols; Shanghai Symphony Orchestra / Long Yu
DG

Long Yu and the Shanghai SO are a central part of our cover story this month: here they shine in Orff's *Carmina Burana* in a truly unique occasion – a concert to mark DG's 120th anniversary in Beijing's Forbidden City.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 104**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
SCHUBERT Piano Works
Artur Schnabel *pf*
Warner Classics

A true piano giant; Schubert performances which reveal Artur Schnabel's hallmark dramatic and spontaneous-sounding style.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 125**

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FOR THE RECORD

Saxophonist Jess Gillam joins Radio 3 as presenter

The BBC made two attention-grabbing announcements this month reflecting its aim to reach new – and particularly young – audiences. Twenty-year-old saxophonist Jess Gillam, a former BBC Young Musician of the Year finalist and recently signed to the Decca label, will now join BBC Radio 3 as a presenter.

As host of a new show called 'This Classical Life', launching on Saturday April 6, Gillam will interview classical artists about their musical interests across genres. Now the station's youngest presenter, she was one of several prominent recording artists Radio 3 announced as new hosts: harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani will present a three-part series, 'The Alternative Bach', guitarist Sean Shibe will present a six-part series, 'Guitar Zone', and soprano Danielle de Niese will present 'Opera Fix', a four-part programme aiming 'to demystify opera for the uninitiated'.

Meanwhile, the BBC also announced that the works to be included in this year's Ten Pieces, its music education initiative,



Jess Gillam's BBC Radio 3 show will explore music that crosses genres

will include a new composition by Hans Zimmer. Called *Earth*, the work by the Oscar-winning composer of film scores including *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Gladiator*, will sit alongside an eclectic range of repertoire including Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*, the *Doctor Who* theme by Delia Derbyshire, George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, Ravi Shankar's *Symphony*, Grażyna Bacewicz's *Overture*, Florence Price's *Symphony No 1*, and 'Winter' from Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*.

This year's theme is called Trailblazers, the chosen pieces focusing on composers and works which have in some way changed or redefined orchestral music.

Since its launch, the Ten Pieces programme – which provides music teachers with the resources to help incorporate the pieces into their curriculum – has, says the BBC, engaged more than 10,000 schools and reached more than 5 million people. The first three seasons have also culminated in BBC Proms concerts, which were all sold out.

ONE TO WATCH

Marie Perbost Soprano

Marie Perbost's debut album couldn't be better suited to her passions and ambitions. When interviewed for a *Gramophone* podcast last year, the young French soprano described herself as a 'fervent defender of operetta'. And in 'Une jeunesse à Paris', a beautifully prepared and charmingly performed recital of operetta arias, mélodies and chansons released on Harmonia Mundi's Nova series, she leaves listeners in no doubt of her affinity with this repertoire.

A young artist's biography usually lists the colleges, the teachers, the awards: in Perbost's case, early musical experiences included singing with Maîtrise de Radio-France under conductors including Kurt Masur and Myung-whun Chung, before studying at the Paris Conservatoire, then in the 2017/18 season joining the Paris National Opera Bastille opera studio; competition successes include the Grand Prix at the 2015 Nadia and Lili Boulanger International Competition.

But in Perbost's case, we suspect just as influential was a childhood in which her father regularly took her to the theatre and boulevard comedies and played her Jacques Brel records, while her grandmother took her to rehearsals at the Opéra Bastille where her mother sang in the chorus and she'd get to hide behind the scenery.

This soprano believes that immersing herself in the music's historic era is crucial, and, having transported herself, she swiftly transports the listener; from the album's opening number of Poulenc's *Les chemins de l'amour* we're straight into the atmospheric and poignant melancholic beauty of Paris past. This heady mix of theatricality and virtuosity prompted Tim Ashley, in his review on page 104, to write: 'It's the emphasis she places on the texts that actually make her stand out ... a most impressive debut: one hopes to hear more of her.' Watch this space, as they say.



New music cassette

To celebrate its 30th anniversary, NMC has returned to its roots – literally. The contemporary classical label invited producer/DJ Beatrice Dillon to delve into its back catalogue to produce a 50-minute mix; she chose works by composers including Judith Weir, Kate Whitley, Benjamin Britten and Huw Watkins. The result is now being issued on a limited-edition cassette. 'That our name, NMC, originally stood for "New Music Cassettes" is difficult to explain to a generation that hardly knows what a cassette is, and is unlikely to have any means of playing one,' says Colin Matthews, NMC's founder and executive producer. 'So it seems appropriate to celebrate our anniversary by releasing a cassette. For anyone who can play it,

it's a very special souvenir.' And for anyone who can't, it can be downloaded from NMC's website.



ORCHESTRA *Insight ...*

Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo

Our monthly series telling the story behind an orchestra



Founded 1953

Home Sala São Paulo

Music Director Marin Alsop (since 2012)

Founding Music Director João de Souza Lima

Like the Latin music it has championed on an international stage, South America's most distinguished orchestra sits all on its own. The Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo (OSESF) occupies the most opulent disused railway station you'll ever see, from which it also masterminds all manner of auxiliary ensembles and Brazil's foremost music publishing house – all under the supervising gaze of a former head of state.

The Brazilian government recognised João de Souza Lima's Orquestra Sinfônica Estadual (as it was then known) a year after its debut at São Paulo's Municipal Theatre in 1953. But financing was erratic and activities sporadic until as late as 1996, when its third chief Eleazar de Carvalho died, issuing a detailed plea for reorganisation almost with his last breath. Pursuing a career in Europe, the Brazilian John Neschling tried to shake off the head-hunters offering him the vacant post by rattling through 'outrageous' demands: a new concert hall; a tripling of musicians' salaries. The bluff didn't work and his terms were met. In 1997 Neschling found himself back in Brazil rebuilding an orchestra – and a railway station.

Flooded with new musicians following a total re-audition, OSESF was ushered into its new home by Neschling in 1999. The dimensions of Sala São Paulo's auditorium, once an open concourse, almost exactly match those of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. The orchestra began to produce characterful recordings for BIS, starting with a full survey

of Villa-Lobos's *Chôros* and *Bachianas Brasileiras*, until frayed tempers saw Neschling leave in 2009. For two years Yan-Pascal Tortelier took charge before the arrival of Marin Alsop in 2012 (she becomes Honorary Conductor at the end of this season).

Gramophone's Alexandra Coghlan has written that Alsop was 'precisely the conductor to develop the orchestra's technique without losing its characteristic colours'. The ensemble's heft has proved a good fit for the conductor's muscular style while her singular way of swinging sophisticated rhythms with a clear head paid dividends in the repertoire we all want to hear this orchestra play. Alsop has twice indulged that desire at the Proms and has recorded a full cycle of the Prokofiev symphonies, bringing out ever more grace and precision while nurturing that distinctly generous sound. A recent Naxos cycle of the Villa-Lobos symphonies under Isaac Karabtschewsky has served as a further yardstick for technical improvements with its 'sure-footed pacing and deep understanding' (Andrew Farach-Colton). Yes, there is more to this gregarious orchestra than latter-day Latin American repertoire. But it's a good place to start. **Andrew Mellor**

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Podcasts

This month's podcast episodes include an interview with recorder player Lucie Horsch (pictured) whose new album, 'Baroque Journey', takes the listener on a thrilling and diverse voyage through some of the recorder's most beautiful repertoire. Read our review of this album on page 71.



Plus, James Jolly pays a visit to Dame Emma Kirkby's North London home to celebrate her 70th birthday and to talk about the composers, artists and producers who have all played a major role in her long career.

Face-to-face with André Previn

We had the privilege of interviewing André Previn on a number of occasions, often at turning points in his career – as he embarked on his relationship with the LSO, as he wrote his first opera, and as he wrote a concerto for his new wife, the violinist Anne Sophie-Mutter. In 'Face-to-face with André Previn' we look back at those memorable encounters and hope to give a measure of the great man.

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André Previn: a tribute

Edward Seckersen remembers one of music's greatest polymaths

You've kept those of us who grew up in the same years feeling young; you've kept those older than you correctly infuriated, and you've been a lighthouse of consistency ... We depend on you and love you and trust you ...' Those words were André Previn's about Leonard Bernstein – but, as Bernstein's daughter Jamie reminded us when Previn left us in February, they could so easily have applied to Previn himself. Parallels between these two musical giants are as unavoidable as they are odious, of course. They were very different animals. But their completeness as musicians, their ability to embrace and cherish music of spectacularly diverse genres, their connection with popular culture, their many and varied gifts as conductors, composers, pianists, and impossibly eloquent commentators make them kindred spirits in so many respects.

I often wonder if Previn's transition into the rarefied world of classical music would have been quite as seamless had the 'Hollywood Years' not prepared him so thoroughly. The pressure of writing and editing scores, making and supervising arrangements, and conducting them – all while under the tyranny of the contract system – made brilliant all-rounders of all those who laboured under it. The old maxim 'do you want it good or do you want it Tuesday?' was no joke. It needed to be good and it needed to be delivered on Tuesday.

In one of my interviews with Previn I remember complimenting him on his score for the movie *Elmer Gantry* with Burt Lancaster and Jean Simmons. It was tough and strident and innovative – just strings and brass. And he smiled wryly and said: 'Ah, that must have been the week I discovered Hindemith's *Music for Strings and Brass*.' He wasn't just being self-deprecating, he was explaining how he and his colleagues kept things 'interesting' in Hollywood, how cross-fertilisation with the classical world kept the bigger picture alive for them. He revered the work of seasoned Hollywood orchestrators like Conrad Salinger and the debt they owed to 20th-century classical greats. His own Oscar-winning work on Lerner and Loewe's *Gigi* and *My Fair Lady*, to say nothing of the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*, were testament to the *sound* he could, and would, coax from an orchestra.

And there was something else. We knew him as an exceptional pianist – but he was a *great* jazz pianist and on disc he memorably dusted down the two much-loved Lerner and Loewe scores mentioned above and in the cool company of 'Shelley Manne and Friends' took them on a voyage of improvisation and rediscovery. They say that out of the greatest discipline comes the greatest freedom – well, Previn was proof conclusive of that truth. The spirit of improvisation was alive and well in every piece he conducted, indeed every phrase he attended as a musician.

His 'arrival' as a classical conductor could hardly have been better timed. He and the London Symphony Orchestra 'found'

each other at precisely the right moment. And they were made for each other. Coming from Hollywood he instantly recognised their extrovert nature and rejoiced in the fact that – and this was his assessment – the LSO were every bit as accomplished sight-readers as any Hollywood studio orchestra. That was really saying something. But it made for super-efficiency in the highly pressurised world of London musical life.

He and the orchestra made plenty of headway fast. They started as they meant to go on. Imagine record company executives today endorsing debut recordings of Walton's First and Shostakovich's Fifth Symphonies (neither were especially core repertoire back then)? The former was and still is an absolutely stonking performance. When Simon Rattle came to record the piece some years later he said ahead of the sessions that there was one version 'none of us' would ever come close to challenging. He was right.

There was something about Walton that chimed with Previn – the edgy (jazzy) angularity, the capricious manner, and dreamy

(that favourite marking *sognando*) romanticism. It was such a good fit. But so was a great deal of English music – most especially Vaughan Williams. He was so in tune with its very particular

Unlike the desperation that underscores attempts to 'popularise' classical music these days Previn never compromised his musical integrity

sensibilities. It wasn't just the filmic quality, it was something more, an inner radiance that shone from performances like that of the Bunyanesque Fifth Symphony (which, incidentally, I remember selecting as a first choice in Radio 3's Building a Library).

Previn chose his repertoire very judiciously. He knew instinctively what he did well and what, temperamentally speaking, he should avoid. His approach was direct, unfussy (that practical Hollywood efficiency paid dividends) and, in the best sense, non-interventionist. There is surely no better recording of Prokofiev's complete *Romeo and Juliet* on disc, nor for that matter Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie*. Iridescent, both of them. Listen to those recordings now and one is reminded what an astonishing array of top-flight soloists occupied the first chairs of the LSO back then. I'm thinking especially of Maurice Murphy, the First Trumpet.

As a composer, Previn was a comparatively late developer where his concert music and opera was concerned. It still surprises me that he never truly cracked musical theatre – his shows *Coco* and *The Good Companions* did nothing to advance or redefine the genre in the way that Bernstein's musicals did. But I still have a lot of time for *A Streetcar Named Desire* even if I think that the play belongs more in the vernacular and that his musicalisation of it veers too steeply towards 'contemporary opera'.

The many tributes to Previn on this side of the pond have all cited or directly quoted his memorable appearance on the Morecambe and Wise show. But Previn was only on that show because he was *already* a classical music pop-star. His charm, erudition and wit were sharpened by his youth, his Beatles haircut, his trendy '60s polo-neck shirts. He and the LSO abandoned stuffy formality and moved with the times. Classical music was young again.



From left: Rehearsing with Vladimir Ashkenazy, Previn's opera *A Streetcar Named Desire* at San Francisco Opera, and with the violinist and his fifth wife, Anne-Sophie Mutter

But unlike the desperation that underscores attempts to 'popularise' classical music these days Previn *never* compromised his musical integrity. On the contrary, he sought to challenge his audiences introducing new and/or neglected repertoire and championing pieces like Rachmaninov's Second Symphony which he and the orchestra took all over the world and turned from a rarity into a justly lauded piece of core repertoire. I've still never heard anyone believe in that piece as he did.

Nor did he *ever* talk down to his audiences. He used popular culture – namely television – to introduce audiences to the music he loved and he did so in his own inimitable way. To say that his 1970s BBC television show *André Previn's Music Night* would be inconceivable today is a terrible indictment on where we are at. You don't reach people with compromises, with gimmicks, with installations or video screens or even wet T-shirts – you reach them with a passion and belief in the art form you love and practise. Like Bernstein, Previn was a hugely persuasive commentator, and his dry wit and skills as a raconteur were huge attributes in promoting the cause of music.

I remember arriving for one interview flustered and a few minutes late having travelled across London from an especially remote recording session and as I pulled out my sheaf of notes he totally defused the situation by quipping, 'Are those the questions or the directions?'

My colleagues will attest to the fact that many of his more outrageous stories were not for public consumption – but one will suffice to illuminate the immense journey he took from La La Land to the London Symphony and beyond. When he conducted his first Beethoven Ninth in London he decided to invite some of his Hollywood cronies as a celebration of the occasion. At the close of the performance when the audience was going nuts (his word) as they do with that piece, one of his Hollywood friends turned to another and said words to the effect of: 'Wow, will you listen to that! Amazing! I'm so thrilled for André. It's just such a shame he had to screw up his career to get here.'

Born April 6, 1929; died February 28, 2019

Visit gramophone.co.uk/feature/face-to-face-with-andré-previn for extensive coverage of André Previn's career as reflected in the pages of *Gramophone*.

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GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ... *Polonaise*

Richard Bratby on an aristocratic Polish dance form with imperial connotations

Polonaise means ‘Polish’ in French, and the language is significant. Poland used to elect its monarch, and at least one tale tells that when the French-born Henri of Anjou was offered the Polish crown in 1573, he ordered the nobility to process before his throne in Krakow. The music on that occasion – in a stately triple time, with a martial rhythmic kick on the first beat – came to define Polishness, whether as polonez, polonaise or polacca. It captured the imagination of German-speaking composers too, particularly after Augustus III of Saxony was elected King of Poland in 1734, though Bach (in his First *Brandenburg* Concerto and Second Suite) and Telemann (in numerous sonatas and concertos) needed little encouragement.

So the polonaise became part of the stylistic wardrobe of composers ranging from Schubert and Mozart to Beethoven (the Triple Concerto – 1803) and Weber. But it was Chopin who defined its modern form in some 20 works, mostly for solo piano, written between 1817 and 1846. Here the polonaise acquired its virtuoso brilliance, its defiant national pride (Poland had been partitioned by Austria, Russia and Prussia in 1797), and its full expressive range – from the heroic bravura of the A major ‘Military’ Polonaise (1838) to the searching poetic depth of the expansive *Polonaise-fantaisie* of 1846. Almost all subsequent polonaises for piano, whether by Scriabin (1897) or Szymanowski (1926) owe some debt to Chopin; though the tradition of the polonaise as a virtuosic genre-piece flourished in

works like Wieniawski’s *Polonaise brillante* (1870) for violin.

Meanwhile, a parallel tradition flourished after Poland was absorbed into the Russian Empire. As a trophy of conquest, the polonaise in 19th-century Russia came to represent the Romanoff dynasty.

Polonaises form the final, patriotic climaxes of Tchaikovsky’s Third Symphony (1875) and Third Suite (1884) and both of Balakirev’s symphonies; standalone works such as Liadov’s Polonaise Op 49 (‘In Memory of Pushkin’, 1899) celebrated national occasions.

And in the St Petersburg scenes in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Christmas Eve* (1895) and Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* (1879), the majestic rhythm of the polonaise makes it clear that we’ve reached the glittering pinnacle of Tsarist society. Prokofiev even deploys a polonaise in the ball scene of his *War and Peace* (1946) – carefully disguised as period colour, though to Russian listeners the symbolism would have been easy to decode. Poland’s national dance had become the patriotic icon of a victorious imperial state, stirring the blood with little regard for roots – or borders. **G**

► Listen to our Polonaise playlist on Qobuz



Couple performing the Polonaise dance

IN THE STUDIO



the exact 150th anniversary of the composer’s death on March 8, 1869.

● **Steven Osborne** went into the studio – in fact, into St Silas’s Church in Kentish Town, London – towards the end of February to record Prokofiev’s Piano Sonatas Nos 6, 7 and 8, the War Sonatas premiered by Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels between 1940 and 1944. The recording will be issued early next year on Hyperion.

● The organist **Iain Quinn** has recorded a selection of Haydn’s organ concertos alongside the considerable talents of **Arcangelo** under the direction of **Jonathan Cohen**. The recording will be issued by Chandos this coming autumn.

● Recipient of *Gramophone*’s 2018 Recording of the Year Award for *Les Troyens*, conductor **John Nelson** continues his service to Berlioz with a recording, for Erato, of the composer’s Requiem, the *Grande Messe des morts*. Captured live in St Paul’s Cathedral in London, the vast work called on the services of the tenor **Michael Spyres**, the Philharmonia Orchestra and a huge choir. To add

to the sense of occasion, the concert took place on

● Another autumn release to look forward to from Chandos sees the first recording of Sir Arthur Bliss’s **Mary of Magdala**, a large-scale choral work written in 1962, which will be coupled with the composer’s *The Enchantress* (1951), originally written for Kathleen Ferrier. **Dame Sarah Connolly** will be joined by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, under the baton of **Sir Andrew Davis**. The recording takes place at Watford Colloseum in mid-April.

● The Canadian pianist **Janina Fialkowska**, who studied with Yvonne Lefébure, has recorded a French album, including works by Debussy, Ravel, Tailleferre and Poulenc, for issue on ATMA Classique. Expect it to appear around September.

● The soprano **Ruby Hughes** and pianist **Joseph Middleton** have been in Potton Hall, Suffolk, recording songs by Mahler and Ives. The release date is not yet confirmed, but it will come out on Naxos.

● Following on from their latest album, ‘Sing Levy Dew’ (12/18), **St Catharine’s Girls’ Choir, Cambridge**, have just recorded an album of music by Palestrina, Gombert and Mouton in honour of their namesake. It will be issued by Resonus Classics in August.

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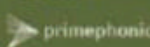
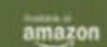
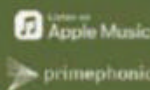
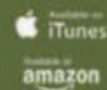
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FROM WHERE I SIT

What are the particular qualities that make Riccardo Chailly so special, asks Edward Seckerson



Last month's comprehensive celebration of Riccardo Chailly has prompted me to reflect on a number of personal encounters and to think again about the very particular qualities that make this most personable and gracious of maestros precisely who he is. Neil Fisher's lunchtime encounter chimed with my own experiences on so many levels: the desire to share, not just food (the natural accompaniment to any serious discourse with this thoroughbred Italian) but ideas, scholarship, and musical theories, both tried and as yet untested.

Unusual among maestros, who often prefer to occupy the higher ground when sparring with journalists, Chailly assumes an equal knowledge from which a stimulating debate can evolve. He delights in presenting his own insights but equally he wants to hear yours. The ego referred to in Fisher's piece is born of intellectual rigour and challenging debate is at the heart of it.

It all began for me in Bologna when Chailly was setting down his 1989 recording of Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Nucci, Pavarotti, and Anderson. I was present at the sessions on behalf of *Gramophone* and, in addition to a guided tour of the town he was calling home, I recall an exercised discussion about operatic performance traditions in Italy and the stylistic interpolation of showy high notes of which that recording is lavishly adorned. This was especially provocative as the then incumbent music director of La Scala (Riccardo Muti) was very much a purist in these matters.

But it was Mahler who really cemented the trust between me and Chailly and I can still recall my surprise at an answering

machine message expressing delight at certain specifics in my review of a live performance of the First Symphony. It couldn't have mattered less to Chailly that interacting with a critic was in general something to be discouraged or even frowned upon.

More extraordinary – though typical – was an informal lunch just prior to a live performance with the LSO of Mahler's extensive sketch for the first movement of his Second Symphony: *Totenfeier*. Chailly was fascinated by the absence (rare in Mahler's case) of clear directives in the score of that movement and I suggested that maybe that was why Klemperer's famous recording of the Second Symphony so pointedly ignored Mahler's precise markings in the finished first movement – especially the dramatic *molto pesante* leading into the sequence of dissonant chords at the climax of the development. Klemperer had, after all, been actively involved as assistant conductor in an early performance of the symphony and will have studied *Totenfeier*.

Chailly's excitement at this 'revelation' now fell into the category of what he described in Fisher's piece as 'reinterrogating scores'. There is no ritardando marked before that crushing sequence of discords and the sudden redoubling of weight and subsequent jamming on of the brakes at the *molto pesante* is so hard to pull off that few even attempt it. That evening Chailly did and it has been a feature of his Mahler Two ever since.

Learning, discovery, knowing the unknown, will always come before ego in Chailly's universe. **G**

ARTISTS & *their* INSTRUMENTS

Hélène Clément of the Doric Quartet on Britten's viola

“Early last year, the Britten-Pears Foundation contacted me about the Doric Quartet's project to record all of Britten's string quartets in Aldeburgh's Snape Maltings, which took place in October. To my astonishment, they asked if I would be willing to make this particular recording on Benjamin Britten's own viola. My first reaction was fear. What if I committed to such an important milestone for the quartet using a viola with which I wasn't entirely comfortable?

A few weeks later I had the chance to try the viola for myself. As soon as my bow touched the strings I was overwhelmed with a feeling of belonging, of understanding. It has always been challenging to find an instrument which suits my style of playing, as I have a rather specific sound in mind. It was extremely emotional to discover that Britten's viola has a wonderfully light quality, with such an expressive A string – precisely the sound I favour. It was made in 1843 in Milan by Giussani, and its tone is extremely rich and full, with a bright quality I absolutely love.

Many historic instruments favour the lower, bass registers, giving them an almost cello-like sound, while I tend to prefer violas which have their own specific voice. Perhaps this comes from my string quartet experience, which involves constantly considering the balance between a group of musicians. I believe that if a viola has its own



specific sound quality, it shouldn't struggle to be heard. The quality of the sound should permeate through. It's not a matter of power, but of an individual and personally characterised voice. The viola is so versatile, I like to think of it as the secret tool in chamber music pieces – that little bit of *je ne sais quoi* which can make all the difference.

Britten's music gives the viola a hugely important role. He loved exploring the extremes of the high A string and finding expression with the natural changes of colour between the strings. In the last movement of his second quartet, the *Chacony*, the viola plays a wild and crazed cadenza, which bursts forth from extreme quartet unison. This passage starts in the extreme high register before stumbling down to the warmth of the C string, exploring all manner of sound colours in its progression. In the *Death in Venice* quote from the last movement of Britten's Third Quartet he also gives the viola a powerful outcry, employing the full register of the instrument to express emotions through its astonishing tonal range. For me, exploring Britten's music with the very sound that he had in his ears as he wrote it is the greatest honour and joy I could have imagined.”
The Doric Quartets recording of Britten String Quartets is released on Chandos in April and will be reviewed next month



Looking eastwards

We have long been told that China holds the key to the future of classical music. As the West looks increasingly to the East, what impact will this have on the global musical community and the music we listen to? **Andrew Mellor** investigates



Main picture: the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra with its conductor Long Yu and the Shanghai Spring Children's Choir (inset) at Deutsche Grammophon's historic 120th-anniversary gala concert which took place at Beijing's Forbidden City in October last year

You don't have to walk far in Shanghai's French Concession before encountering a billboard image of an illuminated vintage light bulb set on an elegant wooden plinth. It is a marketing campaign from the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, informing citizens of the world's second most populous city that electric lamps were first used here in 1879 – the very year the orchestra was established. 'Illuminating the city since 1879' is the slogan, drawing attention to the SSO's 140th season. Neat, even if it feels a little out of step with the audience I join one Sunday night in January and whose appetite for technology probably doesn't stretch to its history. All around me are millennials hungry to hear pianist Haochen Zhang's Rachmaninov and then post about it on Snow, the Chinese intranet's answer to Snapchat.

It is a disorientating fact that the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra is older than the vast majority of its counterparts in Britain and America. China, we are told, is the newcomer to the classical music party – the future, not the past. But so much of what we have come to understand about this country is in need of recalibration, not least as its relationship with the West encounters a new bout of growing pains that could have momentous consequences. While the world's economists have waited patiently for China to falter, the country's own brand of Marxist capitalism has delivered growth that not even the apparatchiks themselves expected. And while our sector has continued to dismiss the phenomenon of Chinese musicianship as little more than astoundingly efficient (more interested in aping iconic virtuosos than furthering the central tenets of the so-called 'tradition' which create, among other things, a rich and distinctive orchestral culture), China may be about to wrong-foot us once more. It was in Beijing, not Berlin, that Deutsche Grammophon launched its 120th birthday celebration last October, and with its latest signing: the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.

It doesn't take an economist to fathom that DG's signing of a long-term deal with the SSO bears some relationship to the size of the Chinese market. Interest in Western classical music has been on a crescendo in China since it was introduced as a new phenomenon following the Cultural Revolution. The country's determined middle classes set special store by music tuition and now some 40 million children (at least) play the piano alone. That translates into a gargantuan market for the consumption of recorded classical music even if only as a study aid or as a residue of having Mozart and Beethoven sonatas tinkling through the family home. The development of streaming has apparently eased the longstanding headache of hard-copy piracy in the region. 'China is now among the top ten markets for recorded music in the world – legal, that is,' DG's president Dr Clemens Trautmann tells me on the phone from Berlin: 'Interest from the younger generation and wide access to mobile technology means there is opportunity for growth.' And growth *means* growth. It's widely believed that top 10 will soon become top five – perhaps top three.

Surely that market is just as easily served by the Western orchestras DG records and that the Chinese hold in high regard? This is where DG's thinking apparently combines strategy with integrity. Trautmann cites the cultural significance of having a leading Asian orchestra on his books and recalls the 'incredibly high standards' he heard from the SSO a few years ago at the Lucerne Festival (SSO staff report that it was Trautmann who pursued the relationship). Besides, it's not all about the orchestra: 'Karajan and Bernstein weren't just music directors, they were cultural entrepreneurs,' he says of DG's linchpin artists of the last century. 'We see similar potential in the partnership of the SSO and its music director Long Yu – a conductor who is making a difference to the cultural landscape inside China, and outside it too.'

The development of the SSO tracks the shifting sands of Shanghai's interface with external cultures. The orchestra was built up by the Russian and Jewish musicians who came here at the beginning of the last century, and later absorbed some of the culture of the French, who maintained control of the Xuhui district until 1943. Since 2014 the

orchestra has resided in a sleek concert-hall complex designed by the Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, with acoustics by his compatriot Yasuhisa Toyota. Ticket touts line the streets in the hours before a concert. This is not the only orchestra in town, and the SSO's current season does more than pander to Western classical music stereotypes. Before Christmas, there were two semi-staged performances of George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*.

'This is a cosmopolitan city and our orchestras are operating in the context of that diversity,' says Sebastian Wang, the SSO's director of artistic planning. In perfect, softly spoken English, he recalls recent performances of Britten's *War Requiem* and Strauss's *Elektra*, and a series of Steve Reich evenings that sold out in minutes. 'I've lived in some Western cities and I love how civilised they are. But there is a sense of things stagnating somehow. Top graduates can't get jobs because society has stabilised. Here, there is opportunity.'

If the creative outlook of the SSO is distinctive, so is its sound. At that Sunday concert it followed an elastic performance of Rachmaninov's First Piano Concerto with an arresting Sibelius Symphony No 2 under guest conductor Xincao Li – a performance that had more to say about Sibelius than plenty I have heard the other side of Helsinki. It overrode issues of idiom with structural clarity, a sure understanding of the rhythmic impetus behind the unfolding journey and a sophisticated ability to speak relatively plainly in this stern music but with a strong sense of colour (including handsome peaty brass).

The SSO is at the top of a growing orchestral pile in China. There are now around 80 other such ensembles, a consequence of the sprouting of populous new cities and their determination not to be outdone by their neighbours. Many orchestras have been struggling to find players – and their feet. 'Two things are very much lacking on the Chinese orchestral scene right now: one is personnel and another is a good system to ensure high standards,' says Doug He, executive director of the Shanghai Orchestra Academy (SOA) – an institution founded by the SSO to improve ensemble-playing culture here, and whose effects are being felt rapidly as China's nascent orchestral infrastructure increasingly draws on lessons learnt in the country's recent past.



Home of the Shanghai SO: Shanghai Symphony Hall, which opened in 2014

'In Western cities there's a sense of things stagnating, but in China there is opportunity' – Sebastian Wang, SSO artistic planning director



Haochen Zhang playing Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 1 with the SSO conducted by Xincao Li

While DG was celebrating 12 decades selling records last autumn, the Communist Party in China was marking 40 years since the introduction of the 'reform and opening up' policies that grafted carefully chosen democratic characteristics on to the country's otherwise autocratic *modus operandi*. From the 1970s, businesses were suddenly free to expose elements of their operation to market forces and were actively encouraged to explore what was making

their European and American counterparts successful.

Even as President Xi attempts to make his current China more self-reliant, the relatively autonomous orchestral sector has been echoing the thinking that made the Chinese economy what it is: by looking to the West and bettering its ideas. 'We did a little bit of a study to find out what was happening in Europe and America, in terms of orchestral personnel,' says He. 'Europe has plenty of fellowship-style apprenticeship schemes but they have nothing much to do with education at a national level.

In America, you have semi-professional orchestras such as the New World Symphony, but rarely do you see apprenticeship schemes because of union rules. The Manhattan School of Music has a successful orchestral-performance programme, but it's based on conservatoire-level experience. At the SOA you graduate with

a master's degree and get 10 to 12 programmes a year performing with the SSO as mandatory.' As a partner institution, the New York Philharmonic provides players for tuition.

There are now 17 SOA graduates in the SSO and others scattered throughout orchestras the world over. The prospect of China's dozens of orchestras maturing quickly is now a very real one, springing from the country's longstanding developmental philosophy of 'crossing the river by feeling the stones'.

The implications stretch far beyond China. While we often think of Asian ensembles as being leavened by Western players, the reality is quite the opposite. There were less than half-a-dozen European and American instrumentalists in the SSO concert I was in the audience for, and in terms of orchestral personnel, the traffic is going in only one direction. Orchestras in San Francisco, London and Munich get their musicians from Beijing, Seoul and Taipei, not the other way round.



Clemens Trautmann and Long Yu prior to a DG press conference in Berlin, June 2018

At the grass roots of instrumental tuition in China, iconic figures such as Lang Lang still loom large. As for the stereotype that Chinese musicians have their sights set on nothing less than solo stardom, He's words acknowledge that it exists while explaining what is being done about it: 'The SSO were often excited to welcome new players who did extremely well in audition but only lasted a few months, because orchestral discipline is so different to that of a soloist. We thought, there must be something we can do to bridge that gap.'

His use of the word 'we' is surely intended to implicate the conductor Long Yu, whose influence permeates Chinese musical life and fully justifies Trautmann's 'cultural entrepreneur' description. Yu is also spoken of as 'China's Karajan'; as founder of the Beijing Music Festival and music director of the SSO, the China Philharmonic Orchestra and the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, he certainly resembles a *Generalmusikdirektor*. This Europe-trained Chinese musician is known for his transformative effect on China's music scene. If he enjoys certain elusive connections to the higher echelons of the Party, there is no doubting he has used them for the greater good. 'Most of us have filters, but he seems to say what is on his mind, and people listen,' says Yo-Yo Ma when I ask how Yu has become so effective; 'he was very clear about what needed to happen in China and he did it. It's great to see someone work like that.'

You get a different view of Yu's impact on China's maturing orchestral infrastructure from the southern city of Guangzhou, a liberal, (relatively) internationalist port in the Pearl River Delta. 'Ask me what you like – I hope we can speak as friends,' the conductor says when I meet him in the five-storey office complex of the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra, an ensemble many claim he has made into one of the best in China since his arrival as music director 16 years ago. A lot flows from that conversation, but it's one of Yu's staff, Roger Shi, who reveals the scale of what is happening here in an idle moment sitting on the lawn outside. Right now, the GSO's own youth orchestra is helping to train 200 conductors of other burgeoning youth ensembles from the region. They are helped through the stuff that you don't learn about at conservatoires: rehearsal structure, publishing and copyright, sectional delegation. The implication is that at least 200 youth orchestras are operating in Guangdong Province alone (which accounts for just shy of eight per cent of China's mainland population). 'Well, it might not be that all of them are full symphony orchestras, but yes,' Shi says. Either way, it's a startling reflection of the acceleration of the country's music life.

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The omnipresent Yo-Yo Ma takes his place at the back of the cello section of the Youth Music Culture Guangdong Symphony Orchestra, of which he is artistic director

Scale is one thing. Aptitude another. My time in Guangzhou overlaps with the third annual Youth Music Culture Guangdong (YMCG), an academy convened by Yu with the full weight of the Party behind him. Beneath the bureaucratic title is a training course with a difference. A faculty formed by Yo-Yo Ma includes members of the Silk Road Ensemble and orchestral musicians from around the world, who mentor a cohort of young musicians towards an orchestral concert. But at least as much time is spent on improvised music, collaborative composition and non-musical communication. Most of the participants are Chinese, but not all. There is a Swiss research scientist who plays the violin and a Japanese trumpeter pursuing an MBA.

‘We are doing a few things here, but the main one is asking: what does a 21st-century musician need? What is music’s role in culture, society and humanity?’ says Ma, who is omnipresent over the course of the 11-day event and even takes his place at the back of the YMCG Symphony Orchestra’s cello section. His galvanising public lecture ‘Content, Communication, Reception’ proves a big draw.

At the start of the week, I joined three groups of musicians who were thrown together and given a few days to prepare a non-notated piece based on a Chinese folk tune. In each case, their progress from hesitant ineptitude to joyous performance was revealing. After they presented the results in a marathon concert on the Saturday night, there was more Sibelius: the Fifth Symphony under conductor Michael Stern in a performance that answered with panache a lot of the work’s more elusive architectural questions.

The premise of YMCG is to open up accomplished Chinese musicians to international currents. On a grander scale, you might describe it as a process of persuading Chinese musicians to discover and nurture their own voice. ‘We are planting seeds which in the future will bring ideas, concepts, connections,’

Yu says. ‘This generation will do better than us.’ When conversation turns to increasingly frosty relations between China and the West, the conductor uses a musical metaphor: ‘People need to learn how to listen to one another, like chamber music players. China is big. Sometimes people from the north don’t even understand people from the south. Then there’s the rest of the world. But so many young people in China today are willing to learn music and to view it as an international language with which they can communicate.’

Ma’s presence here feels like a tacit acknowledgement that Chinese music education’s emphasis on rigour over expression (not to mention overbearing teacher hierarchy, a relic of the Soviet influence) needs loosening. ‘This is a different type of study, a new way of approaching music,’ a young student viola player, Qiyun Zhao, told me. ‘The improvising helps you to become defrosted. It can be overwhelming, to be asked to show something of yourself. But this environment allows you to.’ Many of the YMCG faculty members reported seeing able musicians discover that expression serves technique, not the other way round. ‘There is no learning the notes without thinking about why you’re playing them,’ said Brooklyn Rider cellist Michael Nicolas, one of the string mentors, between coaching sessions. ‘That’s the philosophy here.’

There was a telling guest at the final concert of the YMCG event. An American named Alexander Brose had made the journey down from the north-eastern city of Tianjin, where he is in the process of establishing Tianjin Juilliard School – an outpost of the famous New York conservatoire which is determined to capitalise on the reputation still enjoyed by Western institutions in the East.

For Brose, it was business; his visit was pressing enough to curtail my interview with Yu. But there is more to Western conservatoires’ interest in the East than the commercial benefits

of education provision. German conservatoires offer places to Asian students free of fees, knowing that they enrich the learning environment and breathe oxygen into the country's sprawling music life. Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, *Gramophone* contributor and principal of the Royal Academy of Music in London, concurs: 'My colleagues and I are always impressed at how quickly Chinese students respond to the styles and fashions thrown at them when they come to a sophisticated European city, and how quickly their personalities emerge. You open the windows, and they fly through them.'

While the number of Chinese students at the RAM has increased steadily over the last 15 years, it's not always easy getting them to London; contact through a known teacher or masterclass visitor is a prerequisite. But it's clear they travel westwards for the eclecticism of the opportunities they are offered – precisely the gaps in the local educational provision that the SOA and YMCG are beginning to fill back home, albeit on a small scale. Until *their* activities become more significant, the RAM and other similar conservatoires stand to benefit.

Those asking how quickly the rest of China's orchestras might attain the same level of nuanced musicianship achieved by the SSO might well find the answers in these new approaches – an idea that holds particular interest for Freeman-Attwood. 'In one sense, the Chinese don't know how close they are to having a different dimension in their playing,' he says of some of the Chinese ensembles he has heard. 'However good they are, there are certain things they haven't clocked – even if it's incredibly exciting to hear an orchestra playing well but in the context of another tradition.' With that in mind, is there room for an exchange of ideas in the other direction? 'Yes. I yearn for the days when the UK doesn't rest on its laurels but looks at China and recognises that they haven't been doing this for very long, but by God they do it well – and we ask ourselves, "What can we learn?"'

We can learn a great deal. Certain facets of the SOA and YMCG programmes have not been fully explored by institutions in the West (improvisation, free performance, dialogue with ethnic music), and it's not difficult to argue that as societies we are losing sight of the very idea of music as a noble discipline rather than an exploitable commodity. And while there are doubtless more long-term lessons to be learnt, we can soon afford the Chinese the dignity of simply hearing them at it. The Shanghai Symphony Orchestra's first studio recording for DG is released later this year, and in the summer the orchestra embarks upon a tour of high-profile European and American festivals.

The repertoire on the recording, echoed on certain legs of the tour, reflects China's historic links and border with Russia (Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances*) as well as the flourishing of new Chinese music for symphony orchestra in the form of a new violin concerto by Qigang Chen, *La joie de la souffrance* (2016-17), played by none other than Maxim Vengerov.

The subject of Chinese music and Chinese orchestras is complicated by both migration and appropriation. Trautmann asserts that 'eminent Chinese and Chinese-born composers are present in the concert hall and being represented by the large publishing houses', but the most high profile of them are performed and commissioned mostly in the West and live there. It is the Western phenomenon of the orchestra, along with its



Lang Lang with Xiaogang Ye: the SSO plans to record Ye's setting of the same Chinese poems Mahler used

associated composers, that has thus far captured the imagination of the Chinese. Yu is dismissive of traditional Chinese music poorly arranged for orchestra, and it's clear that a home-grown, sophisticated composition scene is tied to the progress of those 80 orchestras.

But that might prove a useful political tool for the Chinese orchestral sector, internally as well as externally. Away from cosmopolitan Guangzhou and buzzing Shanghai, some music practitioners on the ground report a distinct shift in the attitude of Party officials towards Western culture since the prospect of a trade war with the US became more real, and even as audiences for orchestral music swell. In a parallel conversation, Wang at the SSO draws attention to the tokenism demonstrated by Western composers trying to 'do' China, from Puccini to Damon Albarn. 'There is a lot more sophistication in our musical language than this stereotyped view would suggest,' he says. Trautmann, who attended Juilliard with the composer Ruo Huang, reinforces the point and outlines plans for the SSO to record Xiaogang Ye's setting of the same Chinese poems that form the basis of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*.

'I yearn for when the UK doesn't rest on its laurels and asks, "What can we learn from China?"' – Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, RAM

If the last two decades have proved anything, it's that China's arts bosses are nothing if not politically savvy. As the country's orchestras go from strength to strength, might one solution to the regime's growing hostility towards Western cultural imports be the deeper exploration of China's own voices? With so much talent around, that process could bear rich fruits. When you consider the outward-looking nationalism that delivered some of the great European masterpieces of the late 19th and early 20th centuries – just as those countries found their feet economically – the prospect of history repeating itself might mean it's not just musicians trained in China who will be filling the world's concert halls a century from now, but also music written there. **G**

► Read our review of the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra's debut DG disc on page 104

Following his own path

As he approaches his 50th birthday by recording Bach's Cello Suites, the freethinking, outspoken cellist Alban Gerhardt remains committed to making captivating music, finds **Richard Bratby**

Some pieces of music become landmarks. Neglected for two centuries, sanctified by Casals, and canonised by Rostropovich and Tortelier, Bach's six unaccompanied Cello Suites have in the 21st century acquired the status of revealed truth. They're the 'Old Testament of the cello', the subject of books, documentaries and endless academic theories. And they've become the defining moment in any credible cellist's recorded career: a benchmark, a manifesto, a challenge that simply must be faced.

Which is why, you might assume, Alban Gerhardt is releasing his first recorded cycle of the suites just a few weeks before his 50th birthday. A musical coming of age for a cellist with a remarkably youthful artistic profile: a big, serious project as he locks onto the career trajectory that sooner or later will land him with the label of elder statesman. All very clear-cut, surely? But now, in a neighbourhood cafe at the scruffier end of Kensington, he sits in a leather jacket nursing his latte, gives an amused smile and puts me straight. That's not how it is. That's not how it is at all.

'It came rather late for me,' he says. 'I didn't like Bach in general. The first thing of his that I fell in love with was ... God, I don't remember! It was on the piano. Actually, I played Bach on the piano before I played him on the cello. I played the *Italian Concerto* in a competition. I was completely in love with the slow movement, and I think I played it well – at least, I was very taken with my own beautiful performance. But when it came to the last movement, I went completely over-speed. To be honest, I didn't like it that much. The whole Baroque, festive thing – I didn't buy it. Deep, tragic, that was me; but the other stuff – not really. I'm probably a romantic.'

'So the first Bach that I actually played on the cello was the D minor Suite, the second one. That was good for me: here was something with which I could be a bit depressed. The Fourth Suite came a year later, and it was hard. My teacher Markus Nyikos said I should play it next, because it's the hardest of them all, with the key of E flat, and the stretch, and so on. And he was right. For a long time it was impossible – in fact, only today can I stay relaxed enough in the hand to actually do it.'

It's startling – both Gerhardt's frank admission of his technical struggles with the music (a topic which many

musicians, understandably enough, prefer not to discuss), and the ease with which he admits that the Bach suites are not, after all, the alpha and omega of his musical existence. Today, that's practically heresy. And make no mistake, Gerhardt knows all about the German tradition. He was born in Berlin into (as he says) 'a household filled with music', his father, Axel, a violinist in the Berlin Philharmonic for 43 years. Alban grew up with tales of the glory years of Herbert von Karajan, an experience which seems to have instilled in him – rather than awe – a healthy disrespect for the 'great man' theory of music-making.

'Well, no orchestral musician likes the chief conductor, I guess. But especially towards the end of his life, Karajan was quite bitter, I think, with his ill health and the internal politics. They should have split before that point – it was not a happy marriage at the end. But I never liked that style: I always thought the brass was out of tune, brutal and too loud – the Berlin Philharmonic plays much, much better now.'

Still, I'm trying to unravel how Gerhardt found his way to the Bach suites. There was no musical dogmatism in the family home. 'My father helped me purchase my first cello, but at 21 I was on my own. I knew that in case of disaster I would be covered, but he respected my artistic independence. That was healthy.' And after his breakthrough with the Second Suite, although he'd struggled with the Fourth, Gerhardt moved on to the Sixth. 'For 10 years, I played only that. Nos 3, 1 and 5 came rather later.' The problem, it seems, wasn't playing the suites but listening to them.

'It easily becomes so boring and bland. To make this music speak is so difficult: it's schizophrenic, in that it's actually very simple music but to make it special is almost impossible. I know so many incredibly boring performances. I have sat through so many that for a long time I didn't want to play Bach in public at all. I think it was only 10 years ago that I played the suites in public, and I have never been so nervous in my life – about my ability to actually draw the audience in, that is. I'd long since given up trying to play them in period style. I adore period style, but I tried it for 10 years, and it was just not me.'

The next step came in 2003 when he recorded the Fifth Suite for Oehms, along with the Kodály Solo Sonata and Britten's

'The first suite I played was the D minor. It was good for me: here was something with which I could be a bit depressed'





'It's beautiful' says Gerhardt of the work he commissioned from Brett Dean; he premiered it with the Sydney Symphony in 2018

First Suite. 'I played through the Bach and I felt very good. Then I listened to it and it was flat and boring. So I said to the sound engineer: "It's a bit boring, isn't it?" He just nodded. So I went back to my hotel, I went jogging, and then I listened to the Anner Bylsma recording that I'd brought with me just in case I ran out of hope or ideas, and I heard how much this guy puts into his tone.

'There is so much depth in his sound. I compared it with my own playing. I used little vibrato or none. I phrased well. But it was boring, because I had cut out the sound. So I went and practised for two or three hours that night. I just moved everything one or two centimetres closer to the bridge. That's the biggest challenge of playing Bach, actually – to have good articulation as well as depth of sound. We don't want the Russian style, obviously, but we do have to go in deep, as if it's Prokofiev. The first note of the C minor Suite (the Fifth) has to be as dark as is possible on a cello.'

At this point, I say that I can picture certain period-performance specialists running for cover. 'Not the good ones,' replies Gerhardt. OK, so which players – apart from Bylsma – have shaped his approach? Casals, of course. 'I took part in a blind listening game with three Bach recordings. One was my teacher; one was somebody else, a real Baroque guy. I didn't recognise either of them – and this was back when I still wanted to play everything Baroque, Baroque, Baroque. But then Casals came on, and oh yeah! That's Casals. I had to admit I liked the Casals version best because the music spoke. It was interesting to listen to.'

More recently? 'Obviously Rostropovich, whom I adore, but whose Bach I can do without. Casals's Bach had a poetic message; Rostropovich played it incredibly tastefully.' As did

another internationally famous living cellist, perpetrator of 'the most boring Bach suite I ever heard', whose name Gerhardt asks to keep off the record.

'What's the word? I had this discussion a few days ago with my pianist. I call it "pornographic" playing. Emotional exhibitionism, sound for the sake of sound. I think the person who started it – my least favourite cellist of all time – was Daniil Shafran. He did the cello a big disservice. I knew a girl when I was studying in Cologne: her mother was Shafran's accompanist and she says that he was like a grandfather to her. But she confirmed with me that he did not give a shit about the music, by which I mean, what the composer wanted. And I had this run-in on Twitter with Steven Isserlis, whom I adore, and who admires Shafran. I said, "How can you

love this guy? You're ten times the musician Shafran ever aspired to be." I mean, Steven leaves a legacy. All Shafran did was play the cello well. Big deal.'

Legacy, for Gerhardt, is about more than recordings – though his own discography is like an atlas of newly discovered and rediscovered musical territory, ranging from Pfitzner, Reger, Dohnányi and Bridge to a *Gramophone* Award-nominated account of the Cello Concerto by Unsuk Chin. He has recently commissioned and premiered a concerto by Brett Dean ('It's beautiful,' he says), though for him, giving premieres is

less important than creating a sustainable contemporary canon. 'I talked with Brett Dean about the problems of writing new cello concertos – the fact that since Dutilleux (*Tout un monde lointain* ...,

1967-70) not a single cello concerto has made it into the standard repertoire. I always like to say that in the last 50 years, probably more concertos have been written than in the preceding 200, but none of them has lasted. Modern composers have at their disposal a beautiful big orchestra, and too often they fall into the trap of using it. And you can't! With a cello, you have to be very, very careful. Unsuk Chin did well, and Dutilleux, too, was very careful, using the orchestra for its colours and highlighting what the cello is doing.

'The Dutilleux is a beautiful piece, but it can't be the case that these wonderful composers alive today cannot write something just as beautiful. But obviously all of us – soloists, orchestras, conductors, organisers, audiences – are drawn to a world premiere. We soloists are so proud that we've done 10 of them, but actually that's nothing to be proud of. I mean, Rostropovich established about 10 or 15 major cello concertos as standard repertoire. But who else can say that? Since Rostropovich, nobody. Yo-Yo Ma has all the star power in the world.

'Shafran, my least favourite cellist, did the cello a big disservice: I call it "pornographic" playing – sound for the sake of sound'

He could have ...' Gerhardt sighs. 'But they play it once, they record it once, they don't bother learning it by heart. It took me a hundred hours to learn and memorise Unsuk Chin's concerto. The Brett Dean took 60 hours. And then, of course, I struggle to convince other cellists to play these pieces, because they ask me for my fingerings. And I don't write them down.'

That's a remarkable admission. Gerhardt is so determined to retain his freedom of action in performance, and so secure in his technique, that he doesn't even write personal aides-memoires on the sheet music. For many string players, that'd be like walking a tightrope without a net. For Gerhardt it's something fundamental, and that brings us back to Bach. He's performed the suites to young offenders in a German prison, to newborn babies in a maternity ward, and on the concourses of railway stations across Germany. 'You've seen that video of Joshua Bell playing in a subway, and everyone just walking past?' he says. 'Great player, great violinist – but did the music speak? No. But when I played in the Hauptbahnhof in Berlin, a crowd of 200 or 300 people collected. Perhaps because I was making an effort to play out, even exaggerate.'

'Cellists say that the suites are the "bible", but at the end of his life I don't think Bach would even have remembered writing them'

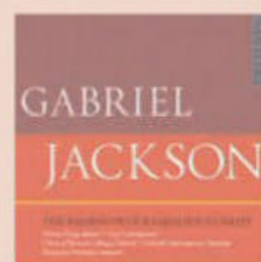
So Gerhardt's Bach scores are as clean as his others – a rejection of the idea that there can ever be any one definitive way for him to play this music, and a token of his determination to communicate directly with whoever his audience, at any given moment, happens to be. 'When I performed the Bach suites for the first time in public, I played from facsimiles. Have you ever looked at them? I realised that they're all completely different and that they contradict each other. In the Prelude of the First Suite, Anna Magdalena Bach, who made the copies, offers four different bowings in the first eight bars. So how do you choose? I think it's just a suggestion. The number one thing is never to use the same bowings twice, because then it just becomes dull.'

And whatever else Gerhardt's 50th-birthday Bach might represent, it's unlikely to be dull. To revere any piece of music too much is to sap it of vitality – of its infinite potential to connect living human beings. 'As I write in the CD booklet, obviously every cellist says that the Bach suites are the "bible". But I'm sure that if we could have asked Bach about them at the end of his life, he wouldn't even have remembered writing them. They're exercises, études. We cellists forget that they're just dances, and not the *St Matthew Passion* we would love them to be. Bach was a genius, but it's necessary to remember that the Passions – and even, to be honest, the entire Bach violin repertoire – are far above our suites.'

'Musicians back then were not cellists, they were everything. They could play at least four or five instruments, they could probably improvise, compose. That's why Anna Magdalena offered four different bowings – players would have known what to infer from that. I love going to concerts, and I always want to be made curious and interested in what I hear. So my idea of playing is to be as spontaneous as possible and to improvise as much as I can. That makes it awful to record, obviously; every take is slightly different. But at the end of the day, we play for an audience, and my aim is to make them interested in listening to what I do.'

► Read our review of Gerhardt's new recording of the Bach Cello Suites on page 86

THRILLING DISCOVERIES ON DELPHIAN



DCD34222



Gabriel Jackson:

The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ

Emma Tring *soprano*, Guy Cutting *tenor*,
Choir of Merton College, Oxford & Oxford
Contemporary Sinfonia / Benjamin Nicholas

Strikingly coloured and richly imaginative, Gabriel Jackson's re-telling of the age-old story of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion – commissioned by Merton College, Oxford – interweaves biblical narrative, Latin hymns and English poetry by Merton alumni, culminating in a rare setting of lines from T.S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding'. With soloists and instrumentalists handpicked by the composer, *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ* receives here a performance to match the work's own harrowing drama and dark ecstasy.

**'majestic and
deeply moving ...'**

It is a rewarding work, deeply sincere, immediately accessible and deserving of wide exposure'
— Choir & Organ, March/April 2019, FIVE STARS



DCD34211

Leighton / Martin: Masses for double choir

The Choir of King's College London / Joseph Fort

Some time in the 1920s Frank Martin, a Swiss Calvinist by upbringing, created a radiant Latin setting of the Mass, but kept it as 'a matter between God and myself'. It was finally performed forty years later, around the same time that the Edinburgh-based composer Kenneth Leighton made his own double-choir setting – a work with moments of striking stillness, delightful to choral singers yet rarely recorded. Contrasts and comparisons abound in this fascinating pairing of works from the supposedly godless twentieth century, and are brought out to the full by the Choir of King's College London's impassioned performances.

New in April 2019



DCD34217

**Lutosławski / Penderecki: Complete music
for violin and piano**

Foyle-Štšura Duo

Following a historical trajectory from the post-Stalin thaw of the 1950s and 1960s to the triumphant re-establishment of democracy near century's end and beyond, the Foyle-Štšura Duo's Delphian debut is a stunning survey of chamber works by two of Poland's leading post-war composers. Michael Foyle and Maksim Štšura transmit every nuance, from the exploded intensities of Penderecki's *Three Miniatures* to the lean, focused expressive charge of Lutosławski's *Partita* and the millennial anxieties of Penderecki's Violin Sonata No 2. And if the underlying story – of political progress achieved and then reversed – is now all too familiar, it is conveyed here through musicianship so unwavering in its virtues as to seem like a reproach to the inconstancies of political life: alert collaboration, reciprocity, freedom, precision, joy.

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The magnificent opera house on the Augustusplatz, home to Opera Leipzig and inaugurated in 1960 with a performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*

WAGNER *comes home*

The historic Saxon city of Leipzig boasts a musical pedigree like none other and is gearing up for an unprecedented celebration of its most famous musical son

No city on earth boasts such strong links to music's greatest personalities as Leipzig does. Johann Sebastian Bach flourished here, Robert Schumann studied here and Felix Mendelssohn established the prototype for Germany's modern musical life here. None of those figures was actually born in the city. But the most iconic German composer of all was. On May 22, 1813, Leipzig saw the arrival of a baby boy soon christened Richard, the ninth child of a police actuary named Carl Wagner.

Luckily for Richard Wagner – and for the generations who followed him – Leipzig was and remains far more than a musical museum. It is a musical powerhouse whose institutions have long set examples for Germany, Europe and the world. As a boy, Wagner attended the school associated with one of Europe's oldest musical institutions: the St Thomas's Boys Choir, founded in 1212 and once trained by Bach. The choir still offers up liturgical performances in the glorious surroundings of St Thomas's Church every Friday and Saturday.



Scenes from Opera Leipzig's 2015 production of Siegfried, the third music drama in opera's greatest tetralogy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

Accompanying those performances are members of the only orchestra in the world that still plays weekly in a church, a concert hall and an opera house: the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. One of the most historic and distinguished orchestras in Europe, the Gewandhaus Orchestra can lay claim to a unrivalled tradition and a distinctively dense, clean sound, described in an interview with *Gramophone* by the conductor Riccardo Chailly – a former Gewandhauskapellmeister – as an ‘incredible wave.’

When not playing in one of Germany's most striking modernist concert halls, the Gewandhaus Orchestra is resident at the third-oldest operatic institution in Europe: Opera Leipzig. The company's home for the past six decades has been the opera house on Augustusplatz, which opened with a performance of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* in 1960. It was on this very site that Wagner saw a production of Beethoven's *Fidelio* in 1827 and vowed to follow in that composer's footsteps.

Wagner went on to change the course of musical history like no opera composer before or since. He remains the most controversial and adored figure in musical history. ‘Wagner is the modern artist par excellence,’ wrote Friedrich Nietzsche, some time after he met the composer in Leipzig. In the second decade of the 21st century, Wagner's 10 mature operas appear to speak to us with ever more power, passion and relevance. As greed and power-lust envelops certain quarters of the world, Wagner's great critique of hubris and materialism, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, has never felt more relevant.

In 2016 Opera Leipzig completed its ‘magnificent’ (Bachtrack) new production of *The Ring*, conducted by the house's General Music Director Ulf Schirmer – the first new *Ring* cycle seen in the city for over 40 years. This spring the company presents its *Ring* complete in a concentrated cycle across five days.


In 2022 Opera Leipzig and Ulf Schirmer will present all Wagner's operatic masterpieces on stage in the order in which they were written

Any performance of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is an overwhelming and transformative experience, whether for committed Wagner fans or for newcomers to his world. But the proud Saxon city of Leipzig won't stop there. As a prelude to the full *Ring*, Opera Leipzig is proud to unveil a new production of Wagner's first mature opera, *Der fliegende Holländer*, just two nights before *The Ring*'s opening and in a new production by

Michiel Dijkema, a great favourite at the company following treasured productions of *Faust*, *Tosca* and *Rusalka*.

The addition of *Der fliegende Holländer* to Opera Leipzig's

repertoire is more than incidental. It will set the company on course to being the only such institution in the world with Wagner's entire mature operatic output in its repertoire. By the summer of 2022, Opera Leipzig and Ulf Schirmer will be ready to present all those masterpieces on stage in the space of three weeks, with a star cast of conductors and singers. With the exception of *The Ring*, whose four operas will be presented together, the works will be performed in the order in which they were written. Thus, in 2022, the annual Leipzig Richard Wagner Festival will be an event without precedent and like none other in the world.

For a few years now, Germans have been talking about ‘hypezig’: a new energy in the city brought about by Leipzig's thriving universities and resurgent visual arts scene. Not for nothing is the Saxon city referred to as the new Berlin. Nor is it the first time Germany's centre of gravity has shifted to this historic town, which in 1989 became the seat of the Peaceful Revolution that reunified Germany. In the spring of 2019 and the summer of 2022, there can be no doubt that Leipzig is the place to be for anyone who takes their music seriously. 

Further information on ticket sales is available at wagner22.com

GRAMOPHONE *Festival* GUIDE 2019

*Welcome to our annual guide for the UK, Europe and North America!
Whether you're a concert-goer, an opera lover, a music-maker, or all three,
you'll find a whole host of events this season to provoke, stimulate and enjoy*

UK FESTIVALS

Aldeburgh Festival

June 7-23

As ever, it's impossible to squeeze into a listing the wealth and breadth of the Aldeburgh Festival, so we strongly recommend a thorough exploration of the website. To give you a flavour of what's on offer for this year though, there are three featured artists-in-residence for 2019, each of whom curates a part of the festival. First, composer Thomas Larcher, whose acclaimed first opera *The Hunting Gun* opens the festival. Second, Mark Padmore, who performs in seven concerts, and explores the relationship between words and music with leading poets. Third is soprano and conductor Barbara Hannigan, who appears in five events, singing Satie, Grisey and Gershwin, as well as conducting the Ludwig Orchestra in several works including Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. Beyond that high-profile trio there are further residencies from the likes of Vox Luminis, pianist Stephen Hough and cellist Alisa Weilerstein. It is also worth noting that music by the late Oliver Knussen features throughout, with the festival presenting the debut performances of the Knussen Chamber Orchestra.

snapemaltings.co.uk/season/aldeburgh-festival

Bampton Classical Opera

July 19-20, The Deanery Garden, Bampton (Oxfordshire)

August 26, The Orangery Theatre, Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire

September 17, St John's Smith Square

Focused on breathing new life into little-known works of the classical period, and equally committed to relaxed, accessible opera at affordable prices, Bampton Classical Opera also gets around, because it follows its three performances split between Bampton and Westonbirt with a performance at St John's Smith Square. This year's opera is Stephen Storace's *Gli sposi malcontenti* of 1785, which Bampton is performing under the cheeky English name, 'Bride and Gloom', in a production designed and directed by Jeremy Gray and conducted by Anthony Kraus.

bamptonopera.org

The Bath Festival

May 17-26

Bath's major multi-arts festival always puts on a strong classical programme of major national and international names. Details for 2019 weren't available as we went to press, so keep checking the website.

bathfestivals.org.uk

BBC Proms

July 19 - September 14

Full details of the BBC Proms season will be announced on April 17.

bbc.co.uk/proms

Beverley and East Riding Early Music Festival

May 24-26

Based in the Yorkshire market town of Beverley and organised by York's National Centre for Early Music, this festival takes 'Passion' as its theme for 2019, whether that be for life, for the countryside, for love or for religion (much of the music takes place across Beverley's array of historic churches). Guests include The Tallis Scholars, Joglaresa, Cantoria and Block4 and the Fitzwilliam Quartet which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. There are also musical workshops, lectures and 'ballad walks' that introduce the stories of Beverley life through song.

ncem.co.uk/bemf

Brighton Festival

May 4-26

Guest directing the UK's largest and most established multi-arts festival this year is the acclaimed Malian singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Rokia Traoré. The classical offerings are, as ever, world

class: one major performance is Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* from the Brighton Festival Chorus and the Philharmonia Orchestra, paired with Beethoven's Triple Concerto performed by the young artists of Trio Isimsiz. Other highlights include András Schiff performing Bach keyboard partitas; the Brighton debut of Sébastien Daucé's Baroque Ensemble Correspondances with music from the court of Louis XIII; Chineke! with a programme of Gershwin, Copland, Ibert and Weill. There is also a vocal recital in the Royal Pavilion Music Room from soprano Miah Persson, tenor Jeremy Ovenden and pianist Malcolm Martineau.

brightonfestival.org

Buckingham Summer Festival

July 7-13

Taking place in the market town of Buckingham, this festival offers morning piano recitals, and lunchtime and evening concerts. Topping this year's offerings is the gala concert in Buckingham Parish Church which sees festival artistic director Robert Secret conduct the Orchestra of Stowe Opera in Schumann's Violin Concerto with soloist Dima Tkachenko, as well as Mahler's Symphony No 5.

buckinghamsummerfestival.org

Bury Festival**May 16-26**

Classical highlights across the 11 days of this multi-arts festival include Nigel Kennedy with his Bach-Kennedy-Gershwin concert, The Tallis Scholars with music inspired by the Sistine Chapel, John Lill playing Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, Armonico Consort's take on the Beowulf tale with Catrin Finch, Elin Manahan Thomas performing music by Toby Young, and the Suffolk Philharmonic Orchestra with Mahler and Tchaikovsky. The festival then concludes with Chineke! performing a jazz-inspired programme with music by Ibert, Copland, Gershwin and Weill.

buryfestival.co.uk**Cambridge Summer Music Festival****July 13-27**

The CSMF is held in atmospheric venues throughout Cambridge, under the artistic direction of David Hill. The programme wasn't available as we went to press, so keep an eye on the website.

cambridgesummertime.com**Carducci Festival Highnam****May 17-19 (see page 31)****Cheltenham Music Festival****July 5-14 (see page 32)****Festival of Chichester****June 15 - July 14**

Classical, rock, blues, jazz, folk and world music rub shoulders in this festival that has become one of the largest in the south. Classical acts this year include The Hanover Band in St John's Chapel, Harriet Mackenzie and Celoniatius Ensemble performing Vivaldi in the cathedral, Oculi Ensemble playing Brahms, Piatti String Quartet in the Assembly Room, Russian pianist Victor Ryabchikov in the cathedral with a John Field and Russian Romantic music programme, Pavlos Carvalho performing Beethoven cello sonatas at St Paul's Church, and Italian pianist Alessandro Pompili with Icelandic clarinettist Einar Johannesson playing an Italian-themed set in the Cathedral.

festivalofchichester.co.uk**Chipping Campden Music Festival****May 11-25**

Based in St James's Church with pianist Paul Lewis as president, this two-week festival is looking as strong as ever for 2019. It opens not with a concert, but with an evening held in conjunction with Chipping Campden Literature Festival, in which Patrick Gale will discuss his novel, *Take Nothing With You*, with Festival Patron of Education Julian Lloyd Webber. The novel is based on the legendary cello teacher Jane Cowan with whom Gale studied and

he will also read extracts from the book. Cowan's most famous pupil was Steven Isserlis, who appears twice during the festival, while another teaching-themed highlight is a masterclass from Paul Lewis. Other artists include the Academy of Ancient Music with the BBC Singers, a viola recital from Lawrence Power partnered by Pavel Kolesnikov, Leeds International Piano Competition first and second prize winners Eric Lu and Mario Häring, and mezzo Sarah Connolly's festival debut, with the Festival Academy Orchestra.

campdenmusicfestival.co.uk**Corbridge Chamber Music Festival****July 26-28**

This Northumberland festival based at St Andrew's Church, Corbridge, is hosted and directed by the Gould Piano Trio (Benjamin Frith, Lucy Gould and Alison Neary) and clarinettist Robert Plane. They perform over the weekend, along with invited guests.

corbridgefestival.co.uk**Dartington International Summer School****July 27 - August 24**

Taking place in the medieval Dartington Estate in the heart of the Devon countryside and under the artistic direction of pianist Joanna MacGregor, this combined festival and summer music school presents more than 100 concerts over four weeks, ranging from early music to classical and jazz, along with courses for all ages and abilities. This is MacGregor's fifth and final year at the helm, and her own concert highlights include the *Goldberg Variations*, and collaborations with artists including cellist Adrian Brendel. Meanwhile, there are concerts and courses from Stile Antico, Stuart Bedford conducting a new work by Brazilian percussionist Adriano Adewale, and the return of Harrison Birtwistle both to lead the advanced composition course and to celebrate his 85th birthday with a concert in the Great Hall.

dartington.org/summer-school**Dorset Opera Festival****July 11-27**

Set within 400 acres of Dorset countryside at Bryanston, this 45-year-old country-house opera festival stages two large-scale productions each year, complemented by a summer school. Worth noting is the festival's relaxed vibe, because while there's the de rigueur fine picnics, champagne bars, cream teas and five-course dinners, there's no dress code. This year's productions are Verdi's *Nabucco* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

dorsetopera.com**FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY****Buxton International Festival****July 5-21**

This Peak District festival celebrates its 40th birthday this year with the championing of young artists: the New Voices Festival Foundation Concert features talent from the Royal Northern College of Music and Cape Town Opera, and the mini opera *Orphans of*



Young voices light up Buxton Opera House in 2019

Koombu brings together schools in Derbyshire. New productions include the world premiere of *Georgiana: Music from the Enlightenment*, a specially commissioned *opera pasticcio* celebrating the life and times of Georgiana Cavendish, the fifth Duchess of Devonshire, and Caldara's rarely heard *Lucio Papirio Dittatore*, with La Serenissima. Other productions include Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* from Opera della Luna.

buxtonfestival.co.uk**Dunster Festival****May 24-27**

This Somerset festival takes place in Dunster's Priory Church of St George over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend. Two highlights for 2019 come courtesy of The Marian Consort and festival co-artistic director Rory McCleery: the closing concert of Bach's *St John Passion* with Nicholas Mulroy as the Evangelist and Matthew Brook singing Christus; and their Gesualdo concert/play, *Breaking the Rules*, with actor Gerald Kyd. Other highlights include Ludus Baroque with soprano Anna Dennis, performing in what will be their first ever appearance outside Scotland, and the Mavron Quartet playing Bach, Dvořák and Welsh composer Peter Reynolds.

dunsterfestival.co.uk**East Neuk Festival****June 26-30 (see page 35)****Edinburgh International Festival****August 2-26**

The Edinburgh International Festival invites some of the finest performers and ensembles from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre to Scotland's capital for three weeks in August. Classical music and opera performances take place at the Festival Theatre, Usher and Queen's Halls, and highlights for 2019 include *Götterdämmerung* with a superb cast of international soloists marking the culmination of four years of concert performances of the *Ring* cycle at the Festival. There is also a concert series celebrating the music of James MacMillan in his 60th birthday year. Check the website for full programme information which is released on March 27.

eif.co.uk**English Music Festival, Dorchester-on-Thames****May 24-27**

Taking place over the second May Bank Holiday weekend, English Music Festival concerts are held in Dorchester Abbey and other Oxfordshire venues nearby. Visiting artists and ensembles for 2019's edition include the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Chamber Ensemble of London, the Piatti Quartet and the Worcester College Chapel Choir. Musical highlights include the world premieres of Robin Milford's *Symphony*, Vaughan Williams's *The Blue Bird*, Stanford's 1875 Violin Concerto in D, featuring soloist Sergey Levitin, and a new work by David Matthews.

englishmusicfestival.org.uk**Fishguard International Music Festival****July 20 - August 2**

Set against the stunning backdrop of the Pembrokeshire coastline, the Fishguard International Music Festival celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. St David's Cathedral hosts the celebratory opening concert with bass-baritone Bryn Terfel, pianist Liŷr Williams and harpist Hannah Stone. Welsh National Opera Orchestra also visits, with a programme including Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder* with mezzo Madeleine Shaw. There's a concert with theorbo player Matthew Wadsworth, harpsichordist Christoph Bucknall and cellist Kate Bennett Wadsworth. There is also the Welsh premiere of Steven Goss's *Theorbo Concerto*, featuring Matthew Wadsworth and the Fitzwilliam Quartet (which is also celebrating its 50th). The festival concludes with the National Youth Orchestra of Wales playing Shostakovich's *Symphony No 10*.

fishguardmusicfestival.com

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Garsington Opera**May 29 - July 26**

Based at the Wormsley Estate in the Chiltern Hills, Garsington Opera celebrates its 30th birthday this year with four new productions and a new partnership with The English Concert. The season opens with Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* with Natalya Romaniw as Mařenka, directed by Paul Curran and with Jac van Steen conducting the Philharmonia. Next, Michael Boyd directs Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, with Douglas Boyd conducting and Jonathan McGovern in the title-role. In celebration of the Offenbach centenary there's the UK stage premiere of *Fantasio*, directed by Martin Duncan and conducted by Justin Doyle in his Garsington debut. The final production, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*, is directed by Louisa Muller in her Garsington debut, with Richard Farnes conducting and Sophie Bevan as the Governess. The season ends with concert performances of Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* conducted by Laurence Cummings. garsingtonopera.org

Glyndebourne**May 18 - August 25**

Glyndebourne celebrates both the 25th anniversary of its new opera house, and the opening of a brand-new state-of-the-art production centre. The festival itself features two new productions: Richard Jones's bold version of Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, conducted by Robin Ticciati and with Allan Clayton as Faust and Christopher Purves as Méphistophélès; then André Barbe and Renaud Doucet's staging of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, conducted by Antonello Manacorda with a cast including David Portillo as Tamino and Caroline Wettergreen as the Queen of the Night. Also new is Fiona Shaw's production of Massenet's *Cendrillon*, conducted by John Wilson with Danielle de Niese in the title-role. Revivals include Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Dvořák's *Rusalka*, and Handel's *Rinaldo*. glyndebourne.com

The Grange Festival**June 6 - July 6**

Based at The Grange in Northington and under the artistic direction of Michael Chance, this festival has appointed Wayne McGregor as director of dance, making this the first country-house festival to include ballet and dance as a central focus of its programming. Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* opens the season, with a cast of young artists supported by the Academy of Ancient Music under Richard Egarr. Then it's Verdi's *Falstaff*, with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Francesco Cilluffo. There's

also McGregor's ballet evening and the John Wilson Orchestra with a programme from Broadway and Hollywood, before Handel's *Belshazzar* in collaboration with The Sixteen and Harry Christophers. thegrangefestival.co.uk

Grange Park Opera**June 6 - July 13**

Based at West Horsley Place, Surrey, Grange Park Opera's new woodland theatre is an intimate five-tiered auditorium. The 2019 season opens with Verdi's *Don Carlo*, followed by Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* directed by Stephen Medcalf, with George Jackson conducting the Orchestra of the English National Opera. Finally, *Porgy and Bess* continues Grange Park Opera's tradition of staging 20th-century American operas and musicals, Stephen Barlow conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra. Mezzo Joyce DiDonato also gives a special recital. grangeparkopera.co.uk

Gregynog Festival**June 22-30**

Wales's oldest extant classical music festival presents beautiful concerts in idyllic locations. Highlights for 2019 include chamber music from the Odysseus Piano Trio, plus Bach from A Nocte Temporis with tenor Reinoud Van Mechelen who are both making Welsh debuts. There are also Aberystwyth concerts from the chamber-folk band VRi and organist Meirion Wynn Jones. gregynogfestival.org

Harrogate International Festival**June 20 - July 27**

Classical, jazz, outdoor theatre and family friendly events are all covered by this North Yorkshire spa town's music festival, with a Young Musician Series complementing the main concerts. harrogateinternationalfestivals.com/harrogate-music-festival/

Holt Festival**July 21-27 (see page 36)****Holy Week Festival****April 14-20**

Curated in partnership with Tenebrae and Nigel Short, this St John's Smith Square festival presents a mix of workshops, ticketed concerts and free late-night liturgical events exploring a vast range of sacred music in celebration of Holy Week. James MacMillan's music features strongly, in honour of his 60th birthday, one highlight of which sees Tenebrae collaborate with the Britten Sinfonia and the BBC Singers for the *Seven Last Words from the Cross*; while another sees the BBC Singers perform a selection of a *cappella* works conducted by MacMillan himself. Other headline performers for 2019 include the

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY**Carducci Festival Highnam****May 17-19**

The Carducci Quartet, plus guest artists, perform in Highnam over one weekend

This annual weekend festival run by the Carducci Quartet takes place at Highnam, near Gloucester. As usual, you can expect plenty of chamber performances from the quartet itself and invited guest artists. There are also free opportunities for families and young musicians to get involved. carduccifestivalhighnam.co.uk

Brodsky Quartet, Ex Cathedra, The Marian Consort, Polyphony and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and The Tallis Scholars. sjs.org.uk; tenebrae-choir.com

Iford Arts**May 18 - September 1**

Proof that the West Country can do country-house opera and picnics too, this festival is set in the Grade I-listed Peto garden of Iford Manor, near Bath. Opera is staged in the round and sung in English. There are informal promenade concerts and seated cloister concerts. Simon Butteriss's production of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* opens 2019, with the Iford Arts Chamber Ensemble conducted by Oliver Gooch. Next, Gooch conducts the Chroma Chamber Ensemble in a new production of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* from James Hurley. Singer Claire Teal is back with her trio for one evening, while another concert showcases the young vocal talent on its New Generation Scheme. ifordarts.org.uk

Lake District Summer Music International Festival**July 27 - August 9**

In the bicentenary year of both Clara Schumann and John Ruskin the festival both goes strong on women composers, and celebrates Ruskin's musical passions illuminated by his own art and those he championed. The 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci and the 50th anniversary of the moon landings is marked meanwhile by I Fagiolini's *Leonardo: Shaping the Invisible*. There's also a day dedicated to Shostakovich's music, life and times, culminating in a concert by the

Brodsky Quartet, and a screening of movie classic *Metropolis* to an improvised accompaniment. Flute is 2019's focus instrument, while artist highlights include the Carducci Quartet, cellist Raphael Wallfisch, pianist Tom Poster, the Berkeley Ensemble, the Marian Consort and the National Youth String Orchestra. ldsm.org.uk

Lammermuir Festival**September 13-22**

Ten days of music take place in beautiful venues across the historic region of East Lothian. This year the festival celebrates its 10th anniversary; highlights include the premiere of the third and final specially commissioned piece on the theme of Prometheus by Stuart MacRae, a double bill from Scottish Opera, and baritone Roderick Williams and pianist Christopher Glynn in a Schubert journey. Other artists include Vox Luminis, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and the Dunedin Consort. lammermuirfestival.co.uk

Leeds International Organ Festival**May 13 - July 8**

Lunchtime and evening recitals, lectures, masterclasses, a young organists' training programme and a Come and Sing Haydn make this festival based in Leeds Cathedral a varied one. Highlights for 2019 include James MacMillan in conversation with Opera North's general director Richard Mantle, preceded by a concert from Indiana USA's Notre Dame Children's Choir and Leeds Cathedral Choir. Nigel Ogden and Thomas Heywood give Monday lunchtime recitals. leedsiof.org

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Cheltenham Music Festival

July 5-14

Cheltenham Music Festival's 75th year includes an immersive venture celebrating Clara Schumann, the return of Classical Mixtape, a new Free Stage, an inaugural 'Composium' for the classical music industry, and a community opera. This year also marks Alison Balsom's arrival as artistic director. The first weekend begins with a bang: Elim Chan conducts the London Symphony Orchestra in a programme that gives British audiences a chance to hear fast-rising Austrian virtuoso violinist Emmanuel Tjeknavorian playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto; then Balsom herself joins forces with the CBSO under Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla for an all-British programme based around the world premiere of Thea Musgrave's new Trumpet Concerto. Violinist Nicola Benedetti also appears with the Academy of Ancient Music directed by Richard Egarr.

cheltenhamfestivals.com/music



Gražinytė-Tyla conducts Balsom and the CBSO

Leeds Piano Festival

March 28 - April 7 (see page 39)

Lichfield Festival

July 5-13

One of the most eclectic multi-arts festivals in the UK, Lichfield's classical programme highlights its cathedral and includes the BBC National Orchestra of Wales playing Elgar and Shostakovich, a bespoke concert celebrating Ivor Novello, The Mozartists with soprano Louise Alder, a Come and Sing Messiah, and a late-night cello recital by Michael Petrov. Voces8 will perform a new commission by Jonathan Dove, who is a featured festival composer. Elsewhere, chamber music highlights include the Albion Quartet, the Atea Wind Quintet, and pianist Lauren Zhang. Artists-in-Residence include mezzo Polly Leech and MOBO award-nominee Cleveland Watkiss, who presents a special Nat King Cole evening for the jazz legend's centenary year.

lichfieldfestival.org

London Festival of Baroque Music

May 10-18

'Crossing the Border' is the LFBM's theme this year, exploring everything from the musical styles that travellers would have experienced on the Grand Tour, to those found in the New World; the development of flamenco is also traced back through the Sephardic traditions of the middle ages. Adrian Chandler and La Serenissima open the festival celebrating German composers Pissendel, Telemann and JS Bach alongside those who contributed to their musical heritage. Other visiting ensembles include Jordi Savall and

Hesperion XXI, Ex Cathedra Consort & Baroque Orchestra with Jeffrey Skidmore, La Nuova Musica and David Bates, Ensemble Masques and Olivier Fortin, and the Choir of Westminster Abbey and St James's Baroque.

lfbm.org.uk

London Handel Festival

March 27 - April 29

'Handel's Divas' is the theme for this year, exploring the lives of the singers for whom Handel wrote many of his most famous roles. One highlight is *Berenice* at the ROH's newly refurbished Linbury Theatre; it hasn't been performed at Covent Garden since Handel presented it there in 1737. Other major events include performances of the rarely heard oratorio *Athalia* and cantata *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*. Lyon's Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu makes its festival debut with a programme of Handel and Porpora. Returning companies include Opera Settecento and the Early Opera Company. As ever, there are also chamber music recitals, lunchtime concerts, guided walks, a Come and Sing *Messiah*, as well as the annual international Handel Singing Competition.

london-handel-festival.com

London Piano Festival

October 2-6

Hosted by Kings Place, this festival under the joint artistic direction of pianists Charles Owen and Katya Apekisheva has a varied programme of multi-genre music and talks. This year's programme features a solo recital from Ingrid Fliter, a concert of duo and solo repertoire from Owen and Apekisheva themselves, a solo jazz recital from Gwylim

Simcock, a lecture recital from Susan Tones, the London premiere of Lucy Parham's new show *I, Clara* with Harriet Walter, and the annual Two-Piano Marathon.

londonpianofestival.com

Longborough Festival Opera

June 5 - August 3

This country house opera festival has an especially intimate feel, thanks to its 500-seat auditorium. It also has a special commitment to the music of Wagner. This year's four new productions are crowned by Amy Lane's staging of *Das Rheingold*, conducted by music director Anthony Negus, followed by Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* from Jenny Miller conducted by Jeremy Silver, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* from Martin Constantine, sung in English and conducted by Thomas Blunt. The Young Artist production for 2019 is *La Calisto*, directed by Mathilde Lopez and conducted by Lesley Anne Sammons in her new orchestration of clarinet, accordion, harpsichord, double bass and recorders, for the Barefoot Band.

lfo.org.uk

The Ludlow English Song Weekend

April 5-7

Under the artistic direction of pianist Iain Burnside, this is the only festival in the UK to concentrate on 20th- and 21st-century English song, which it does with a mix of recitals, choral music, masterclasses, poetry, talks and discussions. This year sees a new relationship with English National Opera and their Harewood Artists Programme, with seven of these young singers performing. Burnside himself plays in a number of concerts, while guitarist Sean Shibe and violinist Michael Foyle join singers in repertoire including Britten, Tippett, Dowland and Elgar. Soprano Susan Bullock leads a masterclass with RNCM students, and Eleanor Alberga leads the young composers workshop.

ludlowenglishsongweekend.com

Machynlleth Festival

August 18-25

This Welsh chamber music festival under the artistic direction of pianist Julius Drake celebrates its local heritage with three days of traditional Welsh music preceding its classical programme. Concerts take place in The Tabernacle, a venue renowned for its exceptional acoustic that also houses the fine art and sculpture gallery of MOMA Machynlleth. One classical highlight is a programme of music from countertenor Robin Blaze and lutenist Elizabeth Kelly, interspersed with Shakespeare readings by Simon Robson. There are also appearances from saxophonist Jess Gillam, cellist Camille Thomas, pianists Marc-André Hamelin and

Pavel Kolesnikov, and soprano Elin Manahan Thomas.

moma.machynlleth.org.uk

Malcolm Arnold Festival, Northampton

October 12-13

For those after a weekend of total immersion in all things Arnold, this festival based at Northampton's Royal & Derngate theatre presents live music, films and talks about the composer.

malcolmarnoldsociety.co.uk
royalandderngate.co.uk

Mendelssohn on Mull Festival

September 1-7

Taking place on the beautiful Scottish islands of Mull and Iona, and in Oban, this festival presents an annual commemoration of Mendelssohn's productive visit to Scotland though a top-notch chamber programme. Details weren't yet available as we went to press, so do check the website nearer the time.

mendelssohnonmull.com

Milton Abbey International Music Festival

July 29 - August 3

Hosted by vocal group Voces8, the festival presents a week of performances in Dorset's 12th-century Milton Abbey, running in tandem with a musical summer school open to people from all walks of life which this year culminates in a performance of Haydn's *The Creation* with the Academy of Ancient Music. Other highlights include Bach's *St John Passion*, and the UK premiere of Magnificat by American composer Taylor Davis, as well as Voces8 artistic director Barnaby Smith conducting the Senesino Players in Bruch's Violin Concerto featuring Thomas Gould.

vcm.foundation

Music@Malling

September 15-29

Held in historic venues in and around West Malling, Kent, Music@Malling presents a mix of contemporary, classical, jazz, world and vocal music. Highlights for 2019 include The Brandenburg Project with Chamber Domaine directed by Thomas Kemp, and the premiere of a multimedia production of Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*. Featured artists include guitarist Craig Ogden, pianist-composer James Pearson, trombonist Callum Au, cellist Richard Harwood, accordionist Milos Milivojevic and the Villiers String Quartet. There's also a Young Artists Platform and a lunchtime concert series. There's a strong accessibility element too, through initiatives such as the education workshops and concerts based around Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes*.

musicatmallong.com

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Photograph:Giuliana Gianfaldoni (soprano) & Nozomi Kato
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Image: *The Ripe Field* (detail) William Crozier (1930-2011) collection of the Crawford Art Gallery Cork, courtesy of the artist's estate



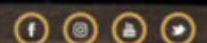
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www.oxfordlieder.co.uk

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Music at Paxton**July 19-28**

Ten days of chamber music takes place in the Picture Gallery at Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, in the Scottish Borders. This year the Maxwell Quartet, Scottish-based Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition winners, are the Music at Paxton Associate Ensemble for 2019-21. Pianist Tom Poster curates a short series of concerts featuring some of Britain's most exciting young artists: violinist Savitri Grier, cellist Laura van der Heijden and French horn player Ben Goldscheider. Further highlights include pianist Paul Lewis playing Haydn, Beethoven and Brahms, and violinist Tasmin Little in recital with long-time collaborator Piers Lane. Other visiting artists include soprano Louise Alder, the Albion Quartet and the Leonore Piano Trio.

musicatpaxton.co.uk**Newbury Spring Festival****May 11-25**

This major Berkshire festival's 2019 programme is looking strong. St Nicolas Church hosts the three big orchestral concerts: the festival opener of Alexander Sitkovetsky performing the Brahms Violin Concerto with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Xian Zhang, the Russian Philharmonic making their festival debut under Thomas Sanderling, and the closing concert for which Martyn Brabbins conducts the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Festival Chorus in Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*, featuring soloists Sophie Bevan and Roderick Williams. Festival debuts come from the Imogen Cooper Trio, Ensemble Masques and the Gabrieli Consort. Returning artists include the Doric and Sacconi quartets, and Tenebrae for Victoria's Requiem Mass. The young artist morning concerts are also back, as is lots of jazz.

newburyspringfestival.org.uk**PRS Foundation's New Music Biennial****July 5-7, London Southbank Centre**
July 12-14, Hull

Following its success at Hull City of Culture and London's Southbank in 2017, this critically acclaimed free festival of new music returns to present a unique snapshot of UK contemporary music covering genres from classical to folk and jazz. Highlights include two BBC Concert Orchestra collaborations: with playwright, poet, novelist and spoken word artist Kate Tempest; and composer and turntable artist Shiva Feshareki. Newly commissioned works come from Jessica Curry, Sarah Tandy, Arun Gosh, Roderick Williams, Claire M Singer, Edmund Finnis, Rolf Hind, Sona Jobarteh and Khyam Allami; visiting artists include Chineke!,

London Contemporary Orchestra, Manchester Collective, Opera North, Metal Liverpool and QuJunktions. The festival is broadcast on BBC Radio 3 and will be available afterwards as a download on NMC.

newmusicbiennial.co.uk**Nevill Holt Opera****June 12 - July 2**

Having opened its brand new 400-seater theatre last year, the festival launches its 2019 edition with artistic director Nicholas Chalmers conducting the Britten Sinfonia in a new production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Anna Morrissey and designed by Simon Kenny, with Tim Morgan as Oberon and Daisy Brown as Titania. The second opera sees Chalmers conduct Royal Northern Sinfonia in Adele Thomas's art-deco production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (originally for Northern Ireland Opera), after which it transfers to The Sage, Gateshead.

nevillholtopera.co.uk**Norfolk and Norwich Festival****May 10-26**

This multi-arts festival is probably the oldest in the UK, going back to 1772. Among 2019's classical offering is Thomas Adès conducting the Britten Sinfonia in Beethoven's Symphony No 9 with soloists Claudia Boyle, Christianne Stotjin and Ed Lyon, as part of their Beethoven symphony cycle. This is preceded by Gerald Barry's *The Eternal Recurrence*.

nnfestival.org.uk**North Norfolk Festival****August 9-17**

Based in St Mary's Church, South Creake, the 15th NNMF is opened by the Echos Quartet from Italy, and the Celia Quartet from the Guildhall School of Music, with a programme including the Mendelssohn Octet. Both young quartets will have taken part in the pre-festival masterclass with Simon Rowland-Jones (joint festival director with Barry Cheeseman, and founder viola player of the Chilingirian String Quartet) and Castalian Quartet violinist Daniel Roberts. Other festival highlights include Chopin's Piano Concerto No 2 in chamber form from the Castalian Quartet and pianist Melvyn Tan, a Schubert programme from the Navarra Quartet, and a programme to feature works by Gounod, Debussy and Strauss from soprano Louise Alder, horn player Stef van Herten and pianist Sholto Kynoch.

northnorfolkmusicfestival.com**North York Moors Chamber Music Festival****August 11-24**

Launched on Armistice Day to mark the end of the Great War, the 2019 festival explores the theme

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY**East Neuk Festival****June 26-30**

Local and international combine at this Fife-based festival. One highlight is the ENF debut from percussionist Colin Currie and his new Colin Currie Quartet, performing the world premiere of a work by



The Colin Currie Quartet perform Huw Watkins

Huw Watkins, and collaborating with community musicians for this year's Big Project for massed percussion. Then, three ENF regulars appear with their new ensembles created especially for the festival: Alec Frank-Gemmill and Alexander Janiczek's period instrument Camerata Janiczek perform Mozart and Handel concertos, and Peter Whelan's Ensemble Marsyas of wind players from across Europe presents Mozart's *Serenade for 13 Winds*. Young artists include violinist Benjamin Baker and viola player Diyang Mei, while familiar returning festival artists include Elisabeth Leonskaja, the Pavel Haas Quartet and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

eastneukfestival.com

'De profundis; a journey into light'. Schubert is a frequent presence, bookending the festival and inspiring works such as Tabakova's *Fantasy Hommage to Schubert* and Mahler's large-ensemble arrangement of *Death and the Maiden*. Contemporary works are also woven throughout the fortnight's music making. Returning festival regulars include violinists Hugo Ticcianti, Roman Mints and Rachel Kolly d'Alba, mezzo Anna Huntley, pianist Katya Apekisheva, and the Oculi Ensemble led by Charlotte Scott.

northyorkmoorsfestival.com**Opera Holland Park****June 4 - August 3**

Continuing its now 16-year partnership with the City of London Sinfonia, OHP opens this year with Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* with soprano Elizabeth Llewellyn in the title-role and Paul Carey Jones making his OHP debut as Lescaut. This production is conducted by Peter Robinson and directed and designed by Karolina Sofulak and George Leigh, joint winners of the 10th European Opera Directing Prize. Further new productions include a double-bill of Wolf-Ferrari's *Il segreto di Susanna*, Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* and Cilea's *L'arlesiana*. There's also Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* which also features the Young Artists Performance night. Other highlights include a special performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* by Juilliard415, on tour from New York, while the Royal Ballet School returns for four shows.

operahollandpark.com**The Oxford Lieder Festival****October 11-26**

'Tales of Beyond: Magic, Myths and Mortals' is the theme for 2019, with the festival inhabiting a world of

storytelling and fairy tales from Peer Gynt to the Erlking to Orpheus and Eurydice. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales opens the festival with orchestral songs by Grieg and Schubert sung by Camilla Tilling and Neal Davies. Other visiting singers include Stéphane Degout, Dorothea Röschmann, Ilker Arcayürek, Louise Alder, Christoph Prégardien, Benjamin Appl, and Carolyn Sampson, with chamber music from the Brodsky and Doric Quartets, Imogen Cooper and others. There are also masterclasses, study events, a ghost tour and a magic show.

oxfordlieder.co.uk**Oxford May Music****May 2-6**

This festival under the artistic direction of violinist Jack Liebeck and administration of particle physicist Professor Brian Foster combines music and science. Musical highlights for 2019 include the opening concert featuring the Goldner String Quartet plus violinists Jack Liebeck and Alexandra Raikhlina, viola player Mathieu Herzog, clarinettist Paul Dean and pianist Filipe Pinto-Ribeiro, with a programme including Beethoven's String Quartet No 11 in F minor, Schumann's *Märchenerzählungen* and Arvo Pärt's *Spiegel im Spiegel*. There's an English-themed vocal concert featuring soprano Mary Bevan. Lecture topics include 'Plastic in the Ocean', 'How Plants Think' and 'The Music of Bubbles'.

oxfordmaymusic.co.uk**Oxford Piano Festival and Summer Academy****July 27 - August 4**

Under the artistic directorship of Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra Music Director Marios Papadopoulos, this festival

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Holt Festival

July 21-27

This North Norfolk Georgian town's festival hosts a mixture of music, literary, drama, visual arts and family events, and this year will be its first under the artistic directorship of Anwen Hurt. Among the classical highlights for 2019 is the Britten Oboe Quartet with Nicholas Daniel on oboe and cor anglais, violinist Jacqueline Shave, viola player Clare Finnimore and cellist Caroline Dearnley. Their programme includes quartets by Britten, Berkeley and Knussen, along with other chamber and solo works.

holtfestival.org



The Britten Oboe Quartet mix solo and chamber

welcomes some of the world's most distinguished pianists and teachers for the week-long series of concerts, masterclasses and lectures, with venues including Holywell Music Room and Merton College's 13th-century chapel. This year there is a focus on the music of Chopin. Visiting pianists include Boris Berezovsky, Ingrid Fliter, Beatrice Rana, Sergei Babayan and Steven Osborne.

oxfordphil.com/oxford-philharmonic/piano-festival

Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival

June 27-30

Originally founded 21 years ago by the Florestan Trio and still run by two of those founding members, violinist Anthony Marwood and cellist Richard Lester, this rural East Sussex festival packs nine concerts into four days. Most concerts are held in the ancient church of St Peter and Paul in Peasmarsh, with the main orchestral event - this year from Aurora Orchestra - in St Mary's Church. Artists joining Marwood and Lester include pianist Gilles Vonsattel, pianist and fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout, Trio Gaspard, guitarist Derek Gripper, violist Lilli Majjala and cellist Bart LaFollette.

peasmarshfestival.co.uk

Perth Festival of the Arts

May 16-25

Now in its 48th year, Perth Festival of the Arts is one of Scotland's leading independent arts festivals and runs for 10 days in iconic venues across the city. Classical highlights include Verdi's *Macbeth* by English Touring Opera in Perth Concert Hall and The Sixteen's 'Immortal Legacy' programme, spanning 500 years of choral music. Other highlights include the Festival's closing concert with the Russian Philharmonic of Novosibirsk under the direction of

Thomas Sanderling, with soloist Sergey Redkin performing Rachmaninov's *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*. There is also a coffee concert from pianist Danny Driver and Spanish soprano Laura Ruhí Vidal.

perthfestival.co.uk

Presteigne Festival

August 22-27

This year Nova Music Opera opens this Powys-Herefordshire border festival centred around contemporary music, presenting Stephen McNeff's community opera, *The Burning Boy*. The festival has an important American strand running throughout this year, including a mini-focus on Aaron Copland. Composers-in-residence are the UK's Cheryl Frances-Hoad and the USA's Hannah Lash (also a virtuoso harpist). There are further new commissions from Freya Waley-Cohen and 2018 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition Prize-winner Liam Mattison. Visiting artists include the Albion Quartet, pianists Tom Poster and Siwan Rhys, violinist Mathilde Milwidsky, cellist Alice Neary and flautist Katherine Bryan. There's also a specially formed Presteigne Chamber Choir, and the Festival Orchestra under artistic director George Vass.

presteignefestival.com

Proms at St Jude's

June 22-30

The church of St Jude-on-the-Hill in North London's Hampstead Garden Suburb is the venue for this local festival. Nevill Holt Opera and the Royal Northern Sinfonia open proceedings with Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Further classical highlights for 2019 include a recital from guitarist Miloš Karadaglić, a programme from violinist Jack Liebeck and pianist Katya Apekisheva to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of Clara Schumann and the 40th

anniversary of the death of Rebecca Clarke, and the Fantasia Orchestra under Tom Fetherstonhaugh who perform Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 3 in C minor with soloist Isata Kanneh-Mason.

promsatstjudes.org.uk

Ryedale Festival

July 12-28

This North Yorkshire festival brings established and emerging artists to perform in spectacular and historic venues across Ryedale, including Ampleforth Abbey. There's a major focus on Purcell, including a new production of *Dido and Aeneas*, and singer Olivia Chaney with a blend of Purcell and folk. Festival residencies include Solomon's Knot, cellist Camille Thomas, the Orsino Ensemble and composer Roxanna Panufnik. Other visiting artists include pianists Imogen Cooper, Pavel Kolesnikov and BBC Young Musician winner Lauren Zhang, while other soloists include tenor Ian Bostridge, saxophonist Jess Gillam and recorder player Tabea Debus. Major orchestral concerts come via the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Orchestra of Opera North, and the Royal Northern Sinfonia.

ryedalefestival.com

Sherborne Abbey Festival

May 3-7

With free entry to 70 per cent of all performances, this is one of Dorset's most accessible music festivals, with close ties with nearby Sherborne School, and performances from Sherborne Abbey Choir. This year is its 10th anniversary, and highlights include Leonard Elschenbroich conducting Sherborne Abbey Festival Orchestra in Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto with Nicola Benedetti, and Dorset Pocket Opera with *La traviata*.

sherborneabbeyfestival.org

Southern Cathedrals Festival

July 18-21

Chichester Cathedral hosts the 2019 edition of this festival that moves around the cathedrals of southern England, featuring their combined choirs. Highlights include a recital from acclaimed German organist Franz Hauk from Ingolsadt, and a service of choral Evensong featuring the world premieres of both Frederick Stocken's festival commission, *The Chichester Service*, and a first broadcast of a setting of George Herbert's poem *The Call* by Canadian Harold East. Older music in the spotlight includes Heinrich Schutz's *Psalmen Davids*, published 400 years ago in 1619, and the culmination of the festival, with the combined cathedral choirs performing Bach's *St John Passion* with period-instrument orchestra Florilegium.

southerncathedralsfestival.org.uk

Southwell Music Festival

August 21-26

This festival, under the artistic direction of baritone Marcus Farnsworth, takes place in and around Nottinghamshire's Norman cathedral over the August Bank Holiday weekend. This year's highlights, performed by the festival ensemble of professional singers and players include Mahler's Symphony No 4 and Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. The full programme is announced on April 5.

southwellmusicfestival.com

St Andrews Voices

October 17-20

Scotland's only festival devoted to the voice includes a recital from bass-baritone Willard White, a residency with vocal ensemble Gesualdo Six, and a unique project with light-projection artists Luxmuralis that will fill the town with light and voices. There's also Evensong, Compline and a Festival Service, plus workshops and public masterclasses, sing-along films and family events.

standrewsvoices.com

St Endellion Summer Festival

July 30 - 9 August

It's the usual top-notch line-up of major artists making their way to Cornwall for this festival under the artistic direction of Mark Padmore, based in St Endellion Church. This year's opening concert features Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 1 directed from the piano by Ryan Wigglesworth, and Mendelssohn's *Paulus*, Part 1, conducted by Adam Hickox with soloists Sophie Bevan, Frances Bourne, Mark Padmore and Roderick Williams. Wigglesworth conducts Elgar's *The Apostles* in Truro Cathedral with soloists Sophie Bevan, Neal Davies and Timothy Dickinson and Britten's *Death in Venice*. Chamber and late-night concerts include 'Songs of the Sea' with Mark Padmore, Roderick Williams and Iain Burnside, with readings by Victoria Newlyn.

endellionfestivals.org.uk

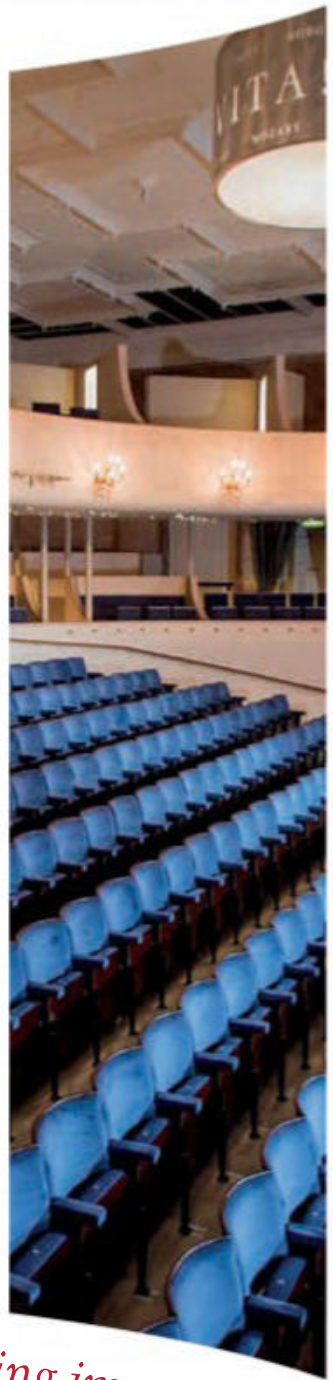
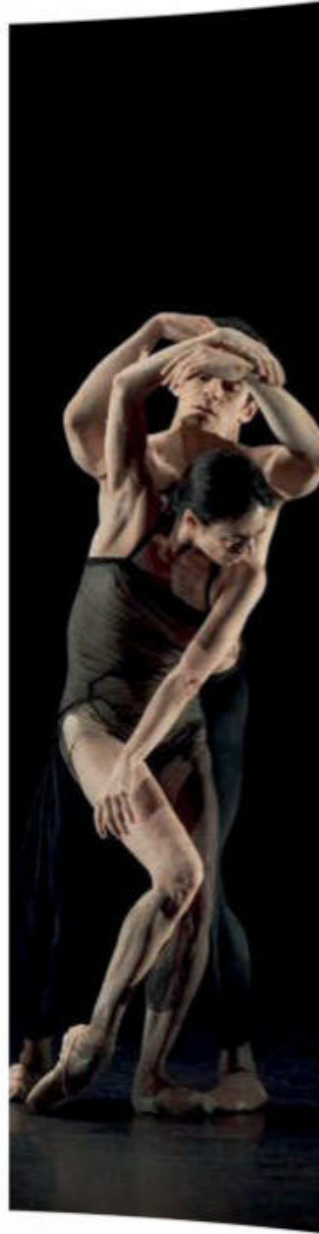
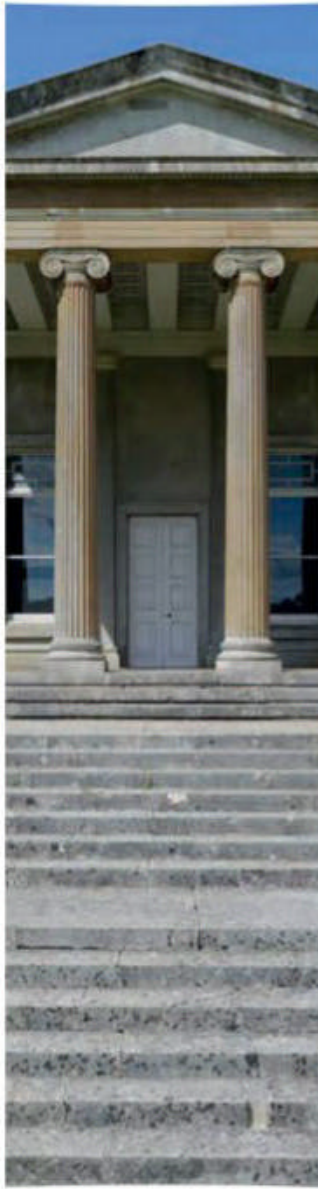
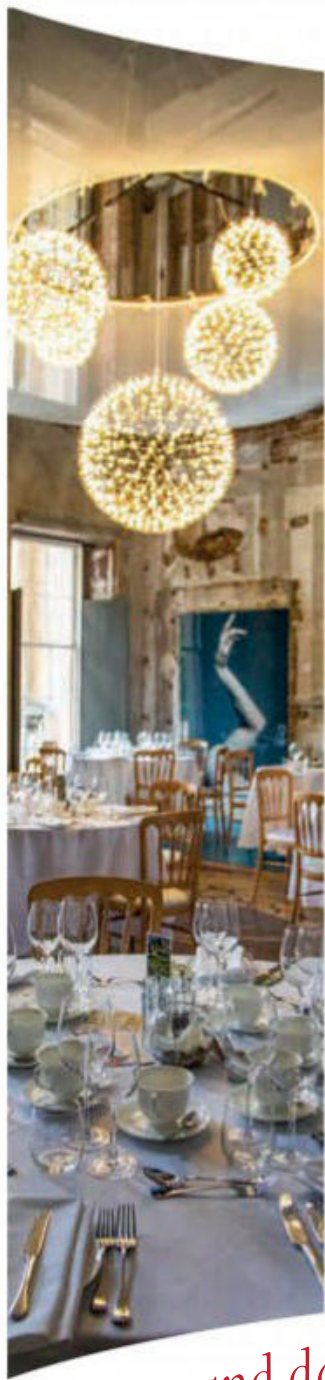
St Magnus International Festival

June 21-27

Under the directorship of Scottish composer Alasdair Nicolson, this Orkney festival, whose 1977 founding group included Peter Maxwell Davies, uses venues throughout the ancient Orcadian landscape including the medieval Cathedral of St Magnus in Kirkwall, and further-flung venues such as on the islands of Westray and Hoy. Artists visiting for 2019 include the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Ars Nova Copenhagen, the Maxwell Quartet, Dinara Klinton, Robin Robertson and the Helsinki Chamber Choir.

stmagnusfestival.com

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Stour Music Festival**June 21-30**

Founded by the countertenor Alfred Deller in 1962 and for the past 45 years under the artistic directorship of his son Mark, this annual festival devoted to early music takes place in the pilgrim church of All Saints' Boughton Aluph, Kent. This year is Mark Deller's final programme before handing over the baton to I Fagiolini's Robert Hollingworth. It's full of regular festival faces, including Harry Christophers and The Sixteen, I Fagiolini with a production of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, Rachel Podger and Brecon Baroque with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Trevor Pinnock, Mark Padmore and Robin Blaze. There's also a festival debut from vocal ensemble Siglo de Oro, while the Festival Choir sings Handel's *Dixit Dominus* accompanied by Brecon Baroque.

stourmusic.org.uk**Swaledale Festival****May 25 - June 8**

This Yorkshire Dales festival combines top-class musical acts with a local flavour thanks to brass bands, folk music, and guided country walks. Classical highlights for 2019 are the Armonico Consort performing Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and a recital from the current BBC Young Musician of the Year, pianist Lauren Zhang, as well as also appearances from former winners, violinist Jennifer Pike and cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason. Other visiting artists include violinist Tasmin Little, baritone Roderick Williams and guitarist Paco Peña. The festival's young local talent includes baritone Miles Taylor and bassoonist Catriona McDermid. It also gets to welcome back two of its former young artists (from a decade ago) who've now risen through the ranks: pianist Richard Uttley and soprano Rowan Pierce.

swalefest.org**Thaxted Festival****June 21 - July 14**

Hosted by Thaxted Parish Church, the opening concert features Robert Porter conducting the Brandenburg Sinfonia in Mozart's Symphony No 25 and Warlock's *Capriol Suite*. Pianist Tom Poster joins them later in the festival for Schumann's Piano Concerto. Other highlights include clarinettist Emma Johnson and her trio with a programme paying tribute to the early jazz greats such as Sidney Bechet, English sacred music from the Choir of Christ's College Cambridge, the London Handel Orchestra with flautist/recorder player Rachel Brown, a visit from the Ronnie Scott's Club, former BBC Young Musician winner pianist Martin James Bartlett, and a Russian programme from Nigel Short and Tenebrae.

thaxtedfestival.co.uk**Three Choirs Festival****July 26 - August 3**

It's Gloucester's turn to host this historic festival and its orchestra-in-residence, the Philharmonia. The 150th anniversary of the death of Berlioz is marked on opening night with a performance of *La damnation de Faust* with soloists including Peter Hoare, Christopher Purves and David Ireland. Other highlights include Rachmaninov's *Vespers* from Ex Cathedra, and the UK concert premiere of Mendelssohn's arrangement of Handel's *Israel in Egypt*. The BBC National Orchestra of Wales visit this year with a centenary performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto with soloist Natalie Clein, plus a revival of John Joubert's 2010 Festival commission *An English Requiem*. James MacMillan's 60th birthday is marked with an Evensong featuring his music, and John Scott Whiteley who premieres his latest organ work. Another noteworthy commission is Bob Chilcott's *Christmas Oratorio*, performed by the Three Cathedral Choirs with Sarah Connolly as soloist.

3choirs.org**The Two Moors Festival****October 11-20**

Covering 1200 square miles of spectacular Dartmoor and Exmoor National Park scenery, the Two Moors Festival presents a programme which once again shows a rise in the number of internationally recognised artists it's now attracting. Highlights include The English Concert with Sarah Connolly and Harry Bicket, a recital given by Roderick Williams, Elizabeth Watts and Roger Vignoles, and the Elias Quartet playing Haydn, Hindson and Schubert. Other concerts include Piers Lane playing Beethoven's First Concerto with BBC Four's Orchestral Challenge winners, North Devon Sinfonia. The festival's famously quirky concerts in the Booking Office at Tiverton Parkway station also return.

twomoorsfestival.co.uk**Ulverston International Music Festival****June 7-15**

This annual festival under the artistic directorship of local pianist Anthony Hewitt is located within a stone's throw of the Lake District National Park, and offers performances from international artists and emerging talent. This year's young talent offerings are topped by a piano recital from BBC Young Musician of the Year Lauren Zhang, and a jazz concert from BBC New Generation Artist, bass player Misha Mullov-Abbado. Other artist highlights include Hewitt himself appearing as soloist with the Royal Northern Sinfonia, the London Tango Quintet, guitarist Craig

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY**Leeds Piano Festival****March 28 - April 7**

Taking place at LSO St Luke's in London and Leeds College of Music, the second edition of this festival connected to the rejuvenated Leeds International Piano Competition continues the event's learning and engagement activities.

'Discover the Piano:

Piano Fantasia' returns;

the festival's biggest primary school event to date, engaging with 1000 schoolchildren. The Young Scholars also participate in learning activities in primary schools and adult care settings in both Leeds and London.

The festival also continues as it began, championing the piano through a mix of major artists and young talent. Highlights include Beethoven sonatas from Steven Osborne, Russian repertoire from Barry Douglas, and Chopin from 2018 Leeds competition winner Eric Lu. There are also performances from Lang Lang International Music Foundation pianists Aliya Alsafa, Jaspar Heymann and Shuheng Zhang, mentored by Lang Lang, the competition's global ambassador; these three also participate in a masterclass led by Steven Osborne at Leeds College of Music.

leedspiano.com

Leeds Town Hall: the competition and festival overlap

Ogden, and pianist Neil Brand improvising to silent film including Laurel and Hardy shorts, Stan Laurel having been born in Ulverston.

ulverstonmusicfestival.co.uk**Vale of Glamorgan Festival****May 18-24**

Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the festival presents a week of programming designed to bring the best new classical music to venues across South Wales. Composers featured include Dobrinka Tabakova, Graham Fitkin, Ben Wallace and Pēteris Vasks; highlights include the world premiere of John Metcalf's new version of *Polly Garter's Aria from Under Milk Wood*, and the Armida Quartet with a new work by Robert Fokkens. An orchestral highlight is Steve Reich's *Music for Ensemble and Orchestra* performed by BBC National Orchestra of Wales. In addition to celebrating Welsh roots and talent there's a focus on new music from the USA, topped by New York quartet, Sandbox Percussion, which performs alongside Dutch Street Organ, 'Astrid'.

valeofglamorganfestival.org.uk**Waterperry Opera Festival****July 25-28**

Hosted by Oxfordshire's Waterperry House and Gardens in its open air amphitheatre, Waterperry Opera Festival had its inaugural season only last year, and its aim is to bridge the gap between performer and spectator through innovative, immersive productions and engaging participatory events. There are two new productions this year: Mozart's *The Magic Flute* from returning director Laura Attridge (*Don Giovanni* 2018) under the

baton of festival music director Bertie Baigent, and a production from director Ruth Mariner of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* that weaves in the text of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. There are also revivals of last year's sell-outs, Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park* and the family show, *Peter Rabbit's Musical Adventure*.

waterperryoperafestival.co.uk/**West Meon Festival****September 13-15**

The Hampshire village of West Meon hosts this festival featuring the musicians of the Primrose Piano Quartet and guests who present chamber music ranging from solos to piano quintets over the course of a long weekend. This year's festival has a literary flavour, with actor Simon Callow joining the Primrose Quartet on Saturday evening. The weekend also features a young artists' platform and masterclasses with local young musicians.

westmeonmusic.co.uk**York Early Music Festival****July 5-13**

The UK's largest early music festival takes the theme of 'Innovation' for 2019. It opens with a new production of the world's first truly great opera, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, with musical direction by Robert Hollingworth of I Fagiolini and stage direction by Thomas Guthrie. Other visiting artists this year include Alamire, The Sixteen, soprano Elin Manahan Thomas and American/Italian Ensemble Lucidarium. The festival closes with the National Centre for Early Music's respected biennial International Young Artists Competition.

ncem.co.uk/yemf

On top of THE WORLD

The Swiss Alps-based Verbier Festival turned 25 in 2018. **Charlotte Gardner** visits this majestic setting to discover exactly what compels top-drawer musicians and audiences alike to return year after year



The Verbier Festival CO conducted by Tákacs-Nagy performing at an open-air concert at La Chaux in 2017

When you ask a music critic – or, indeed, anyone – for their favourite memory from a music festival, chances are that you expect an answer along the lines of a transcendental musical performance from a major artist in an atmospheric concert venue. However, if you were to ask me for my favourite memory of last summer's Verbier Festival, I'd tell you that it was in fact a violin masterclass, given in a small and plain chalet room by Mihaela Martin, renowned teacher and founder of the Michelangelo Quartet, to a young violinist I'd never heard of – because this lesson probably gave me as many tools for listening as it did the young violinist for playing.

Push me for a second one, and I'd tell you that it was a performance of Haydn's *The Seven Last Words* by the Verbier Festival Chamber Orchestra under their director, Gábor Takács-Nagy, which took place in the festival's 1700-seater semi-permanent Salle des Combins tent. But it wasn't just the actual musical performance (wonderful though that was), but specifically one of

the First World War-themed readings delivered between its movements: the one given by Tákacs-Nagy himself, his face so absolutely alive with love for its message that it mattered not one jot that he spoke in Hungarian with no translation. In fact, the experience was perhaps even more moving as a result.

So the fact that my favourite memories involve a notebook stuffed with thoughts on listening and a powerful marrying of music with the spoken word is particularly interesting because each year Verbier also presents what must be the highest concentration in existence of top-level international stars, both younger and luminary. For instance, the second half of that Haydn concert had featured Sir András Schiff performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4, while the other two concerts I'd caught that day (both in Verbier's church) had seen pianist Jan Lisiecki with the Michelangelo Quartet, followed by piano and clarinet trios from violinist Kirill Trousov, cellist Kian Soltani, clarinettist Martin Fröst and pianist Lucas Debargue. The previous day there had been two more combinations of top soloists coming

together to make chamber music, one of them in a programme that had included Daniil Trifonov (in the world premiere of his own Piano Quintet) with Trousov and Soltani alongside violinists Lisa Batiashvili and Vilde Frang, viola players Nobuko Imai and Ori Kam, and cellist Clemens Hagen. The night before that, Grigory Sokolov had given a solo piano recital.

It's fitting that my favourite moments are as they are, as became clear from the interview scheduled amid all the above with the festival's Swedish founder Martin T:son Engstroem (who formerly held a senior executive producer and artist development role at DG, and was a founding partner of a leading artist agency in Paris). 'There are so many festivals in Europe, that the word "festival" is almost misused,' he told me, backstage at the Salle des Combins to the soundtrack of Alain Altinoglu rehearsing the Verbier Festival Junior Orchestra. 'So I tried to find another word to depict what we're doing here, but couldn't; and "festival" is at least easy, because it tells people that they have to buy tickets and go to concerts. But the Verbier Festival is so much more than just concerts. My model was always Aspen in Colorado, which is a festival founded in 1949 by an industrialist who had a vision of marrying nature, music and humanity.'

Last year Verbier celebrated its 25th year, and to say that Engstroem has succeeded in his original aim is something of an understatement when you consider that Verbier is now possibly the world's leading summer centre for classical music performance, artist development and all-round artistic exchange and excellence.

Take the orchestral training programme led by Valery Gergiev (and formerly by Charles Dutoit and James Levine), which comprises the Junior Orchestra (60 members, aged 15-18) and the Festival Orchestra (100 members, aged 18-28). Then there's Takács-Nagy's Chamber Orchestra

for alumni of the Festival Orchestra who've gone out into the profession; this ensemble last year counted among its members seven Met Orchestra players and six from the Berlin Philharmonic. The orchestral programme was by no means a later add-on, either, because even before the festival got its own orchestra in 2000 there was always a youth orchestra in residence: the Young Israel Philharmonic Orchestra for the festival's first two years, followed by two years each from the Jeunesses Musicales World Orchestra and an orchestra made up of Curtis Institute students.

As part of the non-orchestral Verbier Festival Academy, eight students are selected for each of the solo disciplines of piano, violin, viola and cello; they also get thrown together into chamber formations as well as having the opportunity to play in the orchestra. Also part of the academy are the Atelier Lyrique for opera and Lied, a programme for pre-formed chamber ensembles, and a conducting programme for up to four people. Furthermore, the faculty professors, who also perform in the festival, are a 'pinch-onself' line-up of some of the biggest names in performance and teaching, including pianists Schiff and Sergei Babayan, violinists Yuri Bashmet and Pamela Frank, viola players Imai and Tabea Zimmermann, cellists Nicolas Altstaedt and Frans Helmerson, string quartets the Ébène and Brooklyn Rider, and singers Barbara Frittoli (soprano) and Thomas Quasthoff (bass-baritone).

Last year, 200 pianists auditioned for the eight piano places, and competition for the orchestras is no less fierce. 'You can only stay in the Festival Orchestra for three years, meaning we exchange about 40 seats a year, for which we listen to 1500 young musicians from all over the world,' explains Engstroem. 'So it's almost like winning a lottery to come on to one of our training programmes.'

Once you've won the lottery, though, the festival pays for everything – from travel and accommodation to food and tuition. 'Plus we give you tickets, so that in your free time you can go to concerts,' continues Engstroem. 'We go out of our way to make sure that each of the three hundred students who are here have a good time, that they're being nurtured and challenged, and that they go away exhausted.'

Engstroem is equally determined that the established artists are pushed to their limits. 'I always try to challenge even the bigger names to play new works, or to get into chamber music combinations



All-star line-up: Schiff (left) and the Fröst-Debargue-Soltani trio performing at Verbier on the same day last year



which are new to them,' he says. 'I put people together in musical combinations that I imagine would work, and in most cases I must say that they do, forming lasting partnerships.'

One such notable partnership has been that of Yuja Wang and Leonidas Kavakos. 'Yes, that happened here,' he acknowledges when I ask whether he was behind that one. 'Yuja hadn't done very much chamber music when she came here. Likewise, Evgeny Kissin and Trifonov – so they all had to go into a kind of chamber music "cure" when they came to Verbier. It's sort of part of the game: it's not just showing off in recital and orchestra concerts. Kavakos has five concerts this summer, for instance. Yuja and Trifonov have four. You can play one piece of chamber music in one concert, another a week later, and in the meantime a recital. Of course, if the artist has something to say you want them to go up on stage alone and give their message, but I don't think that doing just recitals per se is very interesting. Here, it's also about showing your musicianship through working with others.'

The fees that the artists get for all this work are comparatively modest, and it's the same fee whether they play one or five concerts. However, what they gain in return can be quite profound. 'I try to put them in combinations I think they will grow with', asserts Engstroem. 'I also try to give them the same apartment every time so that they really do feel that this is their summer home; and they're welcome to bring their families, if they want.' He continues: 'One thing you shouldn't forget, either, is that many of these incredibly gifted soloists start when they're teenagers, meaning they've had very little chance to interact with kids of the same generation. All the people around them have been adults. Then suddenly in Verbier they're not the only stars, and they are surrounded by many other kids under the age of 25, meaning it becomes

a sort of haven for them. OK, they have to work hard, but they also have some time for themselves and to live out their youth. For instance, it was here that Lang Lang went to a nightclub for the first time.' As a result of these experiences, artists return year after year: Mischa Maisky has been at Verbier for 24 out of 25 summers; Kissin, for 22; Trifonov, for the past 6.

As for the experience of visitors to the festival, Engstroem's desire is that for them it will equally be a story of exhausting enrichment, and if my experience is anything to go by he has surely succeeded. He hopes audiences will explore beyond each day's four paying concerts to the free-entry masterclasses and the open-door rehearsals, as well as to the unlimited programme of talks, cinema, children's work and experimental 'After Dark' performances.

Verbier's impact also stretches to the wider world of classical listening; it was Engstroem's desire to make all the events accessible to those who couldn't physically come that prompted his longstanding collaborator Hervé Boissière to found medici.tv. That was 10 years ago, only three years after the launch of YouTube – and, of course, the rest is history. Now the world's most comprehensive and high-profile classical music video streaming service, medici.tv still streams Verbier's entire programme each year.

So, Verbier. A festival – or something else? If all you require from a festival is a glut of top-level performances in a beautiful part of the world then it fills that brief with breathtaking ease. If, however, that is all you take away from Verbier, then you have missed not simply a glorious opportunity to be pushed and inspired as a listener and music lover, but also the very core of what it's really all about.

This year's Verbier Festival runs from July 18 to August 3; visit verbierfestival.com and see page 51 for more information

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EUROPE FESTIVALS

Aix-en-Provence Festival

July 3-22

Provence's major opera festival welcomes Pierre Audi as director this year; he has personally put together a programme comprising five festival premieres. In the Théâtre de l'Archevêché there's a new staged production of Mozart's Requiem from Romeo Castellucci with Raphaël Pichon conducting the Pygmalion orchestra and chorus; then Puccini's *Tosca* from Christophe Honoré, with Daniele Rustioni conducting the orchestra and chorus of the Opéra National de Lyon. At the Grand Théâtre de Provence you can see Esa-Pekka Salonen at the helm of the Philharmonia Orchestra for Ivo van Hove's staging of Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany*, and the French premiere of Rihm's *Jakob Lenz*. The Théâtre du Jeu de Paume is host to the world premiere of Adam Maor's festival co-commission *Les mille endormis* (Elena Schwarz conducting Ensemble Lucilin), and the final production is the French premiere of Michel van de Aa's *Blank Out*, at the Conservatoire Darius Milhaud.

festival-aix.com/en

Beethovenfest Bonn

September 6-29

Themed 'Moonlight', the festival this year sees some 50 concerts held in venues throughout Bonn and the surrounding region. Visiting ensembles include the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Adám Fischer, the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra with violinist Carolin Widmann under

the direction of Alan Gilbert, the Camerata Salzburg with Fazil Say, and the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Vladimir Fedoseyev. Soloists include pianists Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Louis Lortie, and bass-baritone Christian Gerhaher.

beethovenfest.de/en

Bergen International Festival

May 22 - June 5

Over two weeks, one of the oldest cities in Norway showcases the best of Norwegian arts and the wider northern European scene across around 40 venues. The 2019 festival opens with the world premiere of *Waiting*, a 'symphonic passion' to the music of Bergen's own Edvard Grieg, accompanied by the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra with Norwegian soprano Mari Eriksmoen. The festival also sees Catalan director Calixto Bieito and Norwegian novelist Karl Ove Knausgård present a new take on Norway's national epic, Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. Concerts in the Grieg-associated Troltsalen concert hall meanwhile include two separate Beethoven programmes from cellist Steven Isserlis and pianist Robert Levin in duo, while cellist Yo-Yo Ma and pianist Kathryn Stott perform in Bergen's city-centre venue, Grieghallen.

fib.no

Festival Berlioz

August 17 - September 1

The festival is held in Hector Berlioz's birthplace town of La Côte Saint-André, near Grenoble, with concerts in the hilltop Château Louis XI and

the surrounding villages; there are no prizes for guessing that they're going large for this 150th anniversary year. Themed 'Le Roi Hector' (King Hector), the 2019 edition counts among its highlights François-Xavier Roth with his Les Siècles period-instrument orchestra performing *La prise de Troie* ('The Fall of Troy'), the first part of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* opera, along with the *Symphonie fantastique*. Valery Gergiev and his Mariinsky Orchestra perform the *Roméo et Juliette* symphony, John Eliot Gardiner and his Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique give a rare performance of *Benvenuto Cellini*, and France's Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse stages *La Damnation de Faust* under its chief conductor, Tugan Sokhiev.

festivalberlioz.com/en

Bregenz Festival

July 17 - August 18

Notable for its picturesque lake stage and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra as its resident ensemble, the Bregenz Festival opens this year with Verdi's *Rigoletto* in a production by Philipp Stölzl conducted by Enrique Mazzola. Then there's Massenet's *Don Quichotte* as the Festspiel production, directed by Mariame Clément in her Bregenz debut, conducted by Antonino Fogliani. The other operas include the Austrian premiere of Bernhard Lang's *La ronde*, and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Orchestral concert highlights from the Vienna Symphony include a Brahms double of the complete symphonies conducted by Philippe Jordan, and a visit from the Vorarlberg Symphony Orchestra under Ariane Matiakh.

bregenzerfestspiele.com

Budapest Festival, Bruges

May 16-18

The Amsterdam Concertgebouw hosts this four-day visit from the energetic Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer, and this year the theme being followed is 'Romantic Symphonies'. One highlight is the opening concert featuring Schubert's *Tragic* Symphony No 4 and pianist Emmanuel Ax playing Mozart's Piano Concerto No 17 in G, K453.

concertgebouw.be/en/budapest-festival-2019

Casa de Mateus

August 12-18

Since 1978, the Casa de Mateus International Music Courses on Baroque performance have taken place at one of Portugal's most

beautiful 18th-century palaces, and while the pedagogical aspect of this festival is its main *raison d'être*, public concerts are very much part of its model. Expect the programme to be wide-ranging too, when the tuition itself covers voice and vocal ensemble, Baroque violin, cello and oboe, and recorder and harpsichord.

casademateus.com

Chorégies d'Orange

July 2 - August 6

With performances staged in the 9000-seater ancient Roman Théâtre Antique d'Orange near Avignon, Europe's oldest festival has an awe-inspiring backdrop. This year marks its 150th anniversary, so it's an especially celebratory programme. The two major operatic productions are Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* supported by the Orchestre de l'Opéra de Lyon under Frederic Chaslin. The ballet is Jean-Christophe Maillot's production of Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* with Monte Carlo Ballet. A symphonic highlight sees the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Orchestre National de France, plus the Radio France Choir and Children's Choir, come together for the very first time to perform Mahler's Symphony No 8 under the baton of Jaap van Zweden. A concert highlight is the 'Nuit Espagnole', for which the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte Carlo accompanies Spanish repertoire from soprano Ana María Martínez, tenor Arturo Chacon Cruz and baritone Plácido Domingo. Another is the festival debut of soprano Anna Netrebko and tenor Yusif Eyvazov in a programme of Italian arias and duos with orchestra.

choregies.fr

Dresden Music Festival

May 16 - June 10

Under the artistic direction of cellist Jan Vogler this festival takes 'Visions' as its 2019 theme, with a view to breaking genre boundaries and reviving traditions in the sense of the Bauhaus philosophy, which itself marks its centennial this year. Highlights among the 56 performances spread across 22 venues include the opening concert from the Dresden Festival Orchestra under its director Ivor Bolton, which pairs Schumann's Symphony No 1 with orchestrated Schubert songs sung by René Pape. Also, there's the world premiere of a cello concerto for Vogler written by three composers from three continents: Sven Helbig, Zhou Long and Nico Muhly. Visiting artists include the David Orlowsky Trio,

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Festival d'Auvers-sur-Oise

June 6 - July 4

With its concerts taking place in the Gothic Église de Notre-Dame d'Auvers-sur-Oise, immortalised by Van Gogh, this festival on the outskirts of Paris deserves to be better known in the UK. One of the reasons for this is the way it gives back to its community, having built a 30-pipe organ for the church that is used for projects such as children's workshops and establishing a choir school. The festival is crucial for the stage it gives young artists of all nationalities not just to perform but to develop their recording careers (as witness its recent recording and DVD with BBC New Generation artist cellist Anastasia Kobekina and pianist Paloma Kouider). It also welcomes some major visiting artists each year; for 2019 they include soprano Joyce DiDonato, pianist Fazil Say, violinist Renaud Capuçon and countertenor Jakub-Josef Orlinski. From the younger generation, there's the return of Anastasia Kobekina, and pianist Kit Armstrong. Ensembles include Valentin Tournet with his period-instrument band, Chapelle Harmonique.

festival-auvers.com



First night: La Maîtrise des Hauts-de-Seine

violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter with the Kammerorchester Wien-Berlin, and the Staatskapelle Berlin under Daniel Barenboim.

musikfestspiele.com

Festival International de Piano de La Roque d'Anthéron

July 20 - August 18

This major French piano festival boasts an impressive main concert space in the grounds of the Château de Florans. It always attracts interesting artists; pianists for 2019 include Boris Berezovsky, Anne Queffélec, Christian Zacharias, Claire Désert, Luis Fernando Pérez, Nikolai Lugansky, Abdel Rahman El Bacha, Bertrand Chamayou, Nicholas Angelich, Alexei Volodin and Denis Matsuev. Also visiting this year are Trio Wanderer, Sinfonia Varsovia and violinist Renaud Capuçon.

festival-piano.com

Festival Printemps des Arts de Monte Carlo

March 15 - April 14

Under the artistic directorship of Marc Monnet, this festival is as much devoted to the music of today as it is to the great repertoire of the past. There is a focus on German-Argentinian composer Mauricio Kagel across the festival's five weeks, and it continues its tradition of commissioning new music with the world premiere of artist-in-residence Alexandros Markeas's *Die Neuen Ruinen von Athen*. The music of Beethoven also features, with his quartets performed by Parker Quartet, Quartuor Diotima and Signum Quartet, and with François-Frédéric Guy directing the piano concertos from the keyboard with Sinfonia Varsovia. Other visiting pianists include Claire Désert, Béatrice Berrut and Aline Piboule, and there's also Britten from the young Canadian cellist Cameron Crozman.

printempsdesarts.mc

Göttingen International Handel Festival

May 17-26

Under the artistic directorship of Laurence Cummings, and boasting a resident orchestra that attracts top Baroque musicians each year, the festival presents *Rodrigo* as its opera production and *Saul* as its oratorio this year. Beyond the big works, visiting instrumental soloists and ensembles perform in venues such as the Great Hall of Göttingen University; these include countertenor Christophe Dumaux and recorder player Dorothee Oberlinger. This is the third year of the relaunched Göttingen Handel Competition for emerging Baroque music ensemble, and added to the mix are the symposium, lectures, guided tours and youth concerts.

haendel-festspiele.de/en

Grafenegg Festival

August 16 - September 8

Under the artistic direction of pianist Rudolf Buchbinder, this 'Austrian Tanglewood' takes place in the grounds of Grafenegg Castle, with resident orchestras the European Union Youth Orchestra and the Tonkünstler Orchestra under Yutaka Sado, and composer-in-residence Peter Ruzicka, who leads the INK STILL WET composer-conductor workshop and whose fanfare opens the festival. This year boasts a great line-up of visiting artists and ensembles: singers Camilla Nylund, Sonya Yoncheva and Christiane Karg, and orchestras including the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Vienna Philharmonic and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

grafenegg.com/en

Gstaad Menuhin Festival

July 18 - September 6

Yehudi Menuhin founded the Gstaad Festival in 1957, and these days its concerts dotted around beautiful Saanenland are a star-studded and many-stranded affair. Artist-in-residence this year is pianist Bertrand Chamayou, and Paris is the theme. Highlights include a French concert featuring Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and Saint-Saëns's First Cello Concerto (with Gautier Capuçon), and Marco Armiliato conducting *Carmen* with the Zurich Opera Orchestra. Other events include Gabriela Montero improvising on Charlie Chaplin's *The Immigrant*, and visiting artists Sol Gabetta and Cecilia Bartoli.

gstaadmenuhinfestival.ch/en

Hamburg International Music Festival

April 27 - May 29

Now in its fourth year, this festival hosted by the Elbphilharmonie takes 'Identity' as its 2019 theme, while also putting the composer spotlight on György Ligeti. His Requiem features in the opening concert alongside Mahler's Symphony No 2 with Kent Nagano and the Hamburg Philharmonic State Orchestra, while the closing concert presents Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* with Barbara Hannigan conducting the Ensemble Ludwig and the choir Capella Amsterdam. Most ambitious of the Ligeti offerings is *Le Grand Macabre* from the NDR Elbphilharmonie under its chief conductor designate Alan Gilbert. Other highlights include a rare piano recital from Krystian Zimerman.

musikfest-hamburg.de/en/thefestival

Heidenheim Opera Festival

May 26 - July 28

Under the artistic direction of Marcus Bosch, this opera festival based at Hellenstein Castle takes 'Glück' ('Happiness') for its 2019

theme. Topping the offerings are new productions of Tchaikovsky's *Queen of Spades* and Verdi's *Ernani*, with Bosch conducting the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra, the festival orchestra Cappella Aquileia and the Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno, and soloists to include Gabriela Scherer, George Oniani, Leah Gordon and Marian Pop. As for the accompanying concert schedule, highlights include pianists Lise de la Salle and Federico Colli, and the SWR Vokalensemble under Marcus Creed.

opernfestspiele.de

Herrenchiemsee Festival

July 16-28

Based in Herrenchiemsee Castle's Spiegelsaal and the monastery of the Fraueninsel, the festival opens this year with Fabio Biondi directing Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Stabat mater* in the Frauenchiemsee Minster with the chamber choir and orchestra of the KlangVerwaltung, soprano Roberta Invernizzi and mezzo Angela Brower. The orchestra returns for the closing concert in the castle's Versailles-esque Hall of Mirrors, for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Mari Kodama, and Bruckner's Symphony No 7 under Kent Nagano. Other highlights include a 'Music from the French Revolution' programme from Rüdiger Lotter and the Hofkapelle München, and Ensemble Tourbillon and viola da gamba player Petr Wagner with a French and German Baroque programme.

herrenchiemsee-festspiele.de/

Incontri in Terra di Siena

July 21-29

This Tuscan festival is under the artistic direction of pianist Alessio Bax, who also performs. Concerts take place in the courtyard of the La Foce estate, famous for its garden, as well as venues throughout the Val d'Orcia region. Artists joining Bax this year include flautist Emmanuel Pahud, clarinettist Paul Meyer, pianist Eric Le Sage, violinists Daishin Kashimoto and Benjamin Beilman, viola player Lawrence Power, cellist Antonio Lysy, tenor Ian Bostridge, French horn player Radovan Vlatković and the Calidore Quartet.

itslafoce.org

Innsbruck Festival of Early Music

July 16 - August 27

This early music festival in the capital of Austria's Tyrol is a great place to hear interesting programmes performed by top period-performance specialists who aren't so regularly seen on UK or US shores. This year's programming marks Emperor Maximilian I, the 350th anniversary of Innsbruck court musician Pietro Antonio Cesti's death, and the 10th instalment of the Cesti Competition for Baroque

singers. Highlights include a new production of the opera *La Merope* by Riccardo Broschi (Farinelli's forgotten brother), conducted by Alessandro De Marchi and starring countertenor David Hansen and mezzo Anna Bonitatibus. Hofkapelle München under Rüdiger Lotter with countertenor Terry Wey also perform Bach sacred concerti and cantatas in the Spanish Hall of Schloss Ambras.

altemusik.at/en

Istanbul Music Festival

June 11-30

'Darkness of Being, Lightness of Being' is the theme this year, with the concerts and events spread over 15 venues, many of them historic. The festival opens with Tekfen Philharmonic Orchestra accompanying Seong-Jin Cho, winner of the 17th International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition. This year's Lifetime Achievement Award goes to viola player Yuri Bashmet who, with the Moscow Soloists, will premiere Alexander Tchaikovsky's *3/7/12*, a co-commission with Bashmet's Sochi Festival. More highlights include pianist Yuja Wang performing with the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra under Gustavo Gimeno, and a chamber strand that begins with Beethoven from violinist Isabelle Faust, pianist Alexander Melnikov and cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras. Other artists include pianist Fazil Say, cellist Daniel Müller-Schott and Cameristi della Scala.

muzik.iksv.org

Itinéraire Baroque

July 25-28

Set in the northern Dordogne region of Périgord Vert, harpsichordist and conductor Ton Koopman's festival celebrates both Baroque music and the medieval architecture of the area. This year's programme includes concerts devoted to the Baroque bassoon, oboe and Marais' viol music. Koopman himself bookends the festival with the Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra performing Bach, Handel, and Mozart with harpsichordist Tini Mathot, followed by Bach's cantatas with bass-baritone Klaus Mertens. Taster concerts, repeating over the course of a day in the area's Romanesque churches, feature flute virtuoso Alexis Kossenko and his Ensemble Les Ambassadeurs, Ensemble Folliart, Ensemble Sarbacanes, and Fabio Bonizzoni and his Ensemble La Risonanza.

itinerairebaroque.com

Kissinger Sommer

June 14 - July 14

Held in the Bavarian spa resort of Bad Kissingen, this festival has the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen as its resident orchestra. The 2019 theme is '1762 - Painted

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MAfestival Early Music in Bruges

Ex machina

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www.mafestival.be

Fri 02 – Sun 11.08.19

Under the heading *Ex machina* MAfestival explores the intriguing bond between god, man and machine. By becoming smarter, healthier and older, with help of technology, we resemble the inaccessible gods we have always envied. According to Yuval Noah Harari, author of the recent bestseller *Homo Deus*, this optimism about progress is leading to the eradication of our own existence. Does the fall come after pride? MAfestival looks for the answers, guiding the audience through music about human gods and divine people, along the rise of musical machines and the downside of technology.

Visit Bruges and discover early music

Highlights

Fr 02.08.19 – 20h00
Concertgebouw Brugge

King Arthur
Purcell's theater magic
Vox Luminis / Lionel Meunier

Tu 06.08.19 – 20h00
St. Jacob's Church

Il castrato
Unearthly voices in baroque Italy
Tim Mead & Arcangelo

We 07.08.19 – 20h00
Chapel of Ter Potterie

Prometheus
Beethoven the Enlightened
Olga Paschchenko

Sa 10.08.19 – 20h00
Concertgebouw Brugge

Il Diluvio Universale
A Sicilian apocalypse
Cappella Mediterranea & Le Choeur de
Chambre de Namur / Leonardo García Alarcón

in Nature's Image', and it opens with Radu Lupu performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4 with the orchestra under Omer Meir Wellber. Also worth mentioning is its pre-festival May 24 recital from soprano Diana Damrau and harpist Xavier de Maistre. Newly signed Warner Classics pianist Martin James Bartlett also visits, having added second prize at the 2018 Bad Kissingen Piano Olympics to his BBC Young Musician win; he plays Bach with the Chamber Orchestra of the Bayerischer Rundfunk. Paavo Järvi conducts the final concert with soprano Julia Lezhneva and the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen, while other visiting artists include countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, pianist Daniil Trifonov and violinist Frank Peter Zimmermann.

kissingersommer.de/en

Lofoten Festival

July 8-13

Set amid the spectacular scenery of Norway's Lofoten islands, this festival alternates each year between piano and chamber. This year it's chamber, and the official opening presents music by a feast of composers played by a clutch of top chamber ensembles who then perform later in the festival. These include the Engegård Quartet playing Webern, Trio Con Brio Copenhagen playing Smetana, Haydn from the Doric String Quartet and Chopin from pianist Ingrid Filter. The festival ends as usual with a final surprise gala concert in Gravdal's Buksnes Church.

lofotenfestival.no

Lucerne Summer Festival

August 16 - September 15

The theme this year is 'Power' for more than 100 concerts over four weeks and five weekends. The Festival Orchestra opens proceedings under the baton of music director Riccardo Chailly with Denis Matsuev performing Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 3. Also making an appearance at the festival is new guest conductor, Yannick Nezet-Seguín. Visiting orchestras are the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Andris Nelsons, the Royal Concertgebouw under Tugan Sokhiev and Daniel Harding, the Berlin Philharmonic under Kirill Petrenko, the Vienna Philharmonic under Bernard Haitink and Andrés Orozco-Estrada, and the London Symphony Orchestra under Simon Rattle. *Artiste étoile* is violinist Leonidas Kavakos, while Teodor Currentzis - with his ensemble musicAeterna - conducts Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* over four days, collaborating for the first time with mezzo Cecilia Bartoli.

lucernefestival.ch

MA Festival

August 2-11

Based in Bruges, this early music festival has a special focus on the new generation of artists, and to that end one of its key events is its International Competitions Musica Antiqua for young Baroque soloists (this year for fortepianists) which offers one entrant a recording on label Ricercar. Beyond the competition, 2019's festival sits under the theme 'Ex Machina: God, Man and Machine', inspired by Yuval Noah Harari's bestseller *Homo Deus* about man's relationship with technology. Vox Luminis open the festival with Purcell's opera *King Arthur*; another highlight is a *Pygmalion* double bill (Rameau's ballet and Benda's monodrama) from Ensemble Apotheosis under Korneel Bernolet, with choreographer Femke Gyselinck.

mafestival.be

Malta International Music Festival

April 29 - May 10

This Valetta-based festival boasts tempting concert venues: larger concerts and events are in the 16th-century Sacra Infermeria, while chamber concerts take place in the 19th-century Robert Samut Hall with its unique Maltese architecture. Details were yet to be announced as we went to press, but expect solo recitals, chamber concerts and grand orchestral concerts.

maltafest.eu

Megève Festival

August 16 - September 1

This French alpine festival, presenting a mix of classical, jazz, films and literary talks, may only be in its second year, but it's thinking big: you can buy last year's 'Live @ Megève Festival' CD on the German label Neos, and the festival is broadcasting some concerts through Swiss Public Radio. The programme for 2019 explores the links between the Savoie and Latin America, with visiting artists including mezzo Jennifer Larmore, violinist Renaud Capuçon, and Antonio Meneses, cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio, who performs Bach's Cello Suites along with Bach-inspired works commissioned from Brazilian composers.

savoytruffle.fr/en/

Festival de Musique Menton

July 24 - August 13

Established in 1950, this festival is one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious, attracting big names each year to this French Riviera town, with the most spectacular of its venues being the torchlit frontage of its Baroque Saint-Michel Archange Basilica. This year it marks its 70th anniversary, and the programme put together by artistic director, conductor Paul-Emmanuel

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Festival de Pacques, Aix-en-Provence

April 13-28

For 2019, this festival (under executive director Dominique Bluzet and artistic director, violinist Renaud Capuçon) once again reaches out to its local community. The most obvious example of this is its annual free concert for the people of Aix: this year it is a Mozart programme in the Cathédrale Saint-Sauveur from Camerata Salzburg under Alondra de la Parra, with piano soloist Robert Levin. In terms of concerts, there are many on offer. Capuçon opens the festival by performing extracts from his recent 'Cinema' album, accompanied by the Orchestre de l'Opéra de Lyon under Lawrence Foster. Further highlights include Rudolf Buchbinder performing all five Beethoven piano concertos with Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden, Emmanuelle Haïm directing *Le Concert d'Astrée* in a Handel programme featuring soprano Sandrine Piau and countertenor Tim Mead, and Alondra de la Parra conducting Camerata Salzburg and the Chœur de l'Orchestre de Paris in a programme of more Mozart. As for regular festival strands, the 2019 Good Friday Mass is Bach's *St Matthew Passion* from the Ensemble Vocal et Instrumental de Lausanne under Michel Corboz, while the Composer Portrait focuses on Benjamin Attahir.

festivalpaques.com/en/



Aix Cathedral: free Mozart under Alondra de la Parra

Thomas, is dominated by major artists including conductor and viol player Jordi Savall, pianists Yuja Wang and Fazil Say, Quatuor Ebène, soprano Patricia Petibon and violinist Renaud Capuçon.

festival-musique-menton.fr

Molyvos International Music Festival

August 16-19

Now five years old, this Greek chamber music festival under the artistic direction of sisters Danae and Kiveli Dörken brings together rising stars and established names. This year the theme is 'Dia-Logos'; visiting artists, most of whom perform in the castle of Molyvos, include pianist Lars Vogt and violinist Christian Tetzlaff. Also on the programme is percussion from Hans-Kristian Kjos Sørensen and Klezmer with David Orlowsky. Running alongside the main events are 'musical moments' throughout the day in the village.

molyvosfestival.com/en/

Moritzburg Festival

August 4-18

Under the artistic directorship of cellist Jan Vogler, the Moritzburg Festival has established itself as one of the top international chamber music festivals since its inception in 1993. Every August, internationally renowned soloists and outstanding young artists from all over the world meet in the picturesque town of Moritzburg to work on new interpretations of chamber music pieces, presenting them in ensembles that are unique and exclusive to the festival.

This year's programming features several events in honour of Clara Schumann's 200th anniversary.

moritzburgfestival.de/en

Munich Opera Festival

June 27 - July 31

General music director Kirill Petrenko opens the festival conducting a new production of Richard Strauss's *Salome*. Other operas include Bellini's *Norma*, Puccini's *Turandot*, Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* and Verdi's *La traviata* and *Otello*, rounded off by Barrie Kosky's new production of Handel's *Agrippina*. There is also a strong dance strand with a Wayne McGregor Portrait and Balanchine's ballet *Jewels* alongside contemporary choreography. In the studio programme, the German premiere of the chamber opera *Z*, by Greek composer Minas Borboudakis, takes place in the Reithalle. Vocal recitals feature singers such as Bryn Terfel, Anna Netrebko, Anne Sofie von Otter, Marlis Petersen and Christian Gerhaher.

staatsoper.de/en

Musique Cordiale

August 9-17

Alongside orchestral concerts, song and oratorio in medieval hill towns between Nice and Aix-en-Provence and centred around Seillans, is the Musique Cordiale Strings Academy for advanced string players, led by Chilingirian String Quartet members Levon Chilingirian and Susie Mészáros. A highlight for 2019 is a performance of Handel's *Saul* featuring the festival choir directed by Graham Ross.

musique-cordiale.com

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Festival Radio France Occitanie Montpellier

July 11-25

The live-programming jewel in Radio France's crown, this festival offers a huge annual programme of concerts encompassing everything from chamber to opera, Baroque to symphonic music, younger-generation to established artists, all played out in picturesque venues in and around the ancient city of Montpellier. Plus, more than 80 per cent of these concerts are free, making it a festival where you'll often find yourself sitting alongside the locals.



An open-air spectacular at Parc du Domaine d'O

The 2019 festival theme is 'Soleil de nuit - Les musiques du nord' ('Night Sun - The Music of the North'), taking festival-goers on a journey around Northern Europe, notably the Baltic states. To that end, it's the National Orchestra of Estonia under Neeme Järvi playing the opening concert, with a programme to include Sibelius's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and Beethoven's Violin Concerto with Swedish virtuoso violinist Daniel Lozakovich. Other highlights include Berlioz's *Messe solennelle* from Le Concert Spirituel under Hervé Niquet, and a chamber recital programme from the fast-rising British viola player Timothy Ridout, accompanied by pianist Frank Dupree.

lefestival.eu

The New Generation Festival

August 28-31

The Florence festival of music and theatre, set in the private Gardens of the Renaissance-era Palazzo Corsini, is devoted to bringing up the next generation of top artists. This year's opera is Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*.

newgenerationfestival.org

New Ross Piano Festival

September 25-29

Under the artistic directorship of pianist Finghin Collins, this festival in the south-eastern Irish port town of New Ross presents this year, as ever, an interesting and thoroughly international crop of young artists alongside established names. Topping this year's offerings is the festival debut of Barry Douglas with his cross-border orchestra Camerata Ireland, performing Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No 5 alongside concertos by Mozart and Beethoven. Douglas also plays the Penderecki Sextet with musicians from Finland, France, the UK and Ireland. Young artists meanwhile include Maurizio Baglini, Clara Siegle and Sae Yoon Chon. Also worth mentioning for 2019 is a full day devoted to Clara Schumann, in honour of the 200th-anniversary year of her birth, and a jazz day.

newrosspianofestival.com

Operadagen Rotterdam

May 17-26

Ten-day Operadagen Rotterdam presents contemporary music theatre and opera productions, as well as a fringe programme with many more intimate shows at unexpected locations throughout the city of Rotterdam, adding up to over 100 performances. The

festival prides itself on testing traditional boundaries, redesigning old repertoire and exploring unusual formats. It's the usual vibrant mix for 2019 too: there's a concert version of Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* from Suzanne Vega, Collegium Vocale Gent and Ictus; 8: *METAMORPHOSIS*, a dance opera created by Nicole Beutler and inspired by Escher, Ovid and the music of Purcell; and the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra performing the first act of Wagner's *Die Walküre*.

operadagenrotterdam.nl/en

Prague Spring Festival

May 12 - June 4

Prague's major historic festival opens this year with Jakub Hrůša leading the Bamberger Symphony in Smetana's *Ma vlást*. Highlights then include John Nelson conducting the first return to the festival in 40 years of Berlioz's *Te deum*. Lisa Batiashvili performs Bartók's Violin Concerto No 1 with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia under Antonio Pappano, and Garrick Ohlsson joins the Boston Symphony Players for the Brahms Piano Quintet in F minor. Rising artists, meanwhile, include violinist Ludmila Pavlová in recital with pianist Alissa Firsova. Another exciting element of the festival is its competition, which for 2019 is open to oboists and flautists, with additional public masterclasses from oboist Jeffrey Rathbun and flautist András Adorján.

festival.cz/en

Rencontres d'Évian

June 29 - July 6

This Swiss chamber music festival presents concerts in the pretty

300-seater Théâtre Antoine-Riboud, built in 1892 in Évian's centre, plus the extraordinary all-wood 1200-seater La Grange au Lac, built for previous artistic director Rostropovich in 1993. The pillar of 2019's programming is Brahms, including both the opening and closing concerts; the former features his Violin Concerto from Janine Jansen (the festival this year is also putting an emphasis on classical music's remarkable women) with the Tonhalle Orchester Zürich under Herbert Blomstedt, who himself will have just celebrated his 92nd birthday. Other artists appearing this year include pianist Benjamin Grosvenor, Quatuor Arod and the festival's artistic directors Quatuor Modigliani.

lagrangeaulac.com/festival/rencontres-musicales-d-evian

Rheingau Musik Festival

June 22 - August 31

With 155 concerts held in scores of spaces across the Rheingau and adjoining regions, this is a huge festival. The main venues are Eberbach Monastery, Johannisberg Palace, Vollrads Palace and the Wiesbaden Assembly Rooms, along with numerous churches and wineries. The theme for 2019 is 'Courage', with additional themes of 'Next Generation' and 'Jazz & More'. Artist-in-residence pianist Daniil Trifonov performs at six events, playing repertoire from Beethoven to Pärt. Focus artists include soprano Christiane Karg and jazz singer Curtis Stigers. The Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen is the festival's first ever orchestra-in-residence, performing four concerts encompassing music from Bach to Tchaikovsky.

rheingau-musik-festival.de

Riga Jurmala Music Festival

July 21 - September 1

Led by Martin Engstroem, artistic director of the Verbier Festival, this is a new-concept music festival in the coastal resort of Jurmala. With an aim to draw on the heritage of Latvia, it's built around four ambitious weekends, each anchored by a leading international orchestra and conductor: the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra with Mariss Jansons; the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra under Zubin Mehta; the London Symphony Orchestra under Gianandrea Noseda; and the Russian National Orchestra under Mikhail Pletnev. On the menu is a mix of symphonic, solo and chamber concerts given by leading stars alongside up-and-coming talent.

riga-jurmala.com

Rosendal Festival

August 8-11

Titled 'DSCH', referring of course to Dmitri Shostakovich, this festival, under the direction of pianist Leif

Ove Andsnes, presents for 2019 a wide spectrum of the composer's works alongside music by his predecessors, contemporaries and successors, and - through a series of talks and lectures - will be asking the question: can we listen to Shostakovich's music today without considering the political ramifications of his time? Artists joining Andsnes include fellow pianists Sasha Grynyuk and Igor Levit, baritone Andrei Bondarenko, violinist Veriko Tchumburidze, viola player Tabea Zimmermann, cellist Clemens Hagen and Quatuor Danel. Young Norwegian artists are featured as usual, with the return of violinist Sonoko Miriam Welde and the debuts of cellist Amalie Stalheim, percussion duo PERCelleh and percussionist Christian Krogvold Lundquist.

baroniet.no/en/rosendal-festival/

Salzburg Festival

July 20 - August 31

Mozart's birthplace is the scene for major operatic and theatrical productions and concerts each summer, with operas mostly performed by the Vienna Philharmonic. This year the festival's programming revolves around myths from antiquity, and the opening premiere is Peter Sellars's new production of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, conducted by Teodor Currentzis, with Russell Thomas in the title-role and Paula Murrihy as Idamante. Other new productions are Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers*, Cherubini's *Médée* and Enescu's *Oedipe*. Strauss's *Salome* is revived and there's also a focus on Pascal Dusapin, plus chamber concerts from the likes of pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Martha Argerich, and concert performances of Cilea's *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Verdi's *Luisa Miller*. The Whitsun production of Handel's *Alcina* starring Cecilia Bartoli also gets another airing.

salzburgfestival.at

Savonlinna Opera Festival

July 4 - August 3

Operas at this Finnish festival take place in the grounds of the city's medieval Olavinlinna castle. The season's new production is Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* directed by Kari Heiskanen and conducted by Frédéric Chaslin, while festival revivals are Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Visiting companies include La Scala, Milan, with Verdi's seldom-heard *I masnadieri* and a gala concert, while the Vienna Volksoper performs its production of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. There's also Mozart's Great Mass in C minor in Kerimäki Church from the Festival Chorus, and the return of the Timo Mustakallio Singing Competition.

operafestival.fi/en

KIRKER MUSIC FESTIVALS

FOR DISCERNING TRAVELLERS

Kirker Holidays offers an extensive range of independent and escorted music holidays. These include tours to leading festivals in Europe such as the Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago and the Verdi Festival in Parma, as well as Glyndebourne, Buxton and opera weekends in Vienna, Milan and Venice.

We also host our own exclusive music festivals on land and at sea featuring internationally acclaimed musicians. For those who prefer to travel independently we arrange short breaks with opera, ballet or concert tickets, to all the great classical cities in Europe.

THE KIRKER CORNWALL MUSIC FESTIVAL

A FOUR NIGHT HOLIDAY | 1 OCTOBER 2019

Following on from the Kirker Spring Music Festival in St. Mawes, we will return to Cornwall in the autumn joined by the Sacconi Quartet.

Alongside three private concerts, the highlights of our new Cornwall Festival are the visits we make to Boconnoc near Lostwithiel. This magnificent house is set in twenty acres of wonderful gardens. We will be welcomed twice at Boconnoc by Elizabeth Fortescue who lives on the estate – once for a morning concert after which we will stay on for lunch and a talk, and again for an evening concert followed by dinner in the house. The tour is based in the pretty town of Fowey, ten miles from Boconnoc.



Price from £1,567 per person (single sup. £248) including four nights accommodation with breakfast, one lunch at Boconnoc, four dinners – two in the hotel, one at the Hotel Tresanton and one at Boconnoc, three concerts, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities, and the services of the Tour Leader.

THE KIRKER ISCHIA MUSIC FESTIVAL

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 11 OCTOBER 2019

For our fourteenth exclusive Kirker Music Festival in the Bay of Naples we will be joined by the Carducci Quartet; James Gilchrist, tenor; Tim Horton, piano and Simon Rowland-Jones, viola.

We shall enjoy six exclusive concerts in the lovely concert hall overlooking the garden at La Mortella, the former home of Sir William & Lady Walton. Our base for the duration will be the 4★ Albergo San Montano in the small resort of Lacco Ameno, with spectacular views of the Bay of Naples. We include a guided tour of the garden at La Mortella and a half-day sightseeing tour of Ischia. There are three optional tours; one to Herculaneum and the Villa Oplontis, one to Naples; and the third is a half-day exploration of the Ischia countryside.



Price from £2,489 (single supp. £350) for seven nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, seven dinners, seven concerts, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

THE WEST COAST OF FRANCE: BORDEAUX, ROUEN & BRITTANY

A TEN NIGHT MUSIC CRUISE | 10 SEPTEMBER 2019

with The Chilingirian String Quartet; Simon Rowland-Jones, viola; Carole Presland, piano; Sarah-Jane Lewis, soprano and Morgan Pearce, baritone

We set off from Liverpool and enjoy river cruising, spectacular coastal scenery and two historic cities – as well as a programme of world-class music. Our first port of call will be Lorient, then two days in Bordeaux, renowned as the world's wine capital. Sailing around the Brittany peninsula, we will travel almost 70 miles up the Seine as far as Rouen, before our last stop in picturesque Saint-Malo.



Prices from £2,590 per person for ten nights including full-board, private drinks parties, all concerts, plus exclusive talks and interviews.

THE KIRKER MUSIC FESTIVAL ON LAKE COMO

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 23 SEPTEMBER 2019

The destination for our autumn Music Festival is one of the most beautiful corners of Italy. Lined with villas, cypress trees and low-arching mountains, Lake Como has a peaceful timelessness like no other.

The lake has inspired many composers, and we will enjoy performances by a renowned group of international soloists, including pianists Melvyn Tan and Iain Burnside, tenor Luis Gomes, violinist Elisabeth Perry and violist Simon Rowland-Jones. There will be an optional performance of L'elisir d'amore by Donizetti at La Scala in Milan. We stay at the 4★ Imperiale in the village of Moltrasio, the hotel has a lakeside restaurant and a spa with an indoor pool.



Price from £2,947 per person (single supp. £580) for seven nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, five dinners, one lunch, five concerts, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities, and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

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Les Troyens, The Hector Berlioz European Youth Orchestra - Isère, François-Xavier Roth

Roméo et Juliette, Mariinsky Orchestra and Choir, Valery Gergiev

Benvenuto Cellini, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, Monteverdi Choir, Sir John Eliot Gardiner

La Damnation de Faust, Orchestre national du Capitole de Toulouse, Tugan Sokhiev
and also **Harold en Italie**, **Les Nuits d'été**, **Symphonie fantastique**, **Le Corsaire...**



Berlioz
2019

WWW.ISERE-TOURISM.COM

ALPES
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Schubertiade Hohenems**Markus Sittikus Hall****April, May, July, September and October****Schubertiade Schwarzenberg****Angelika Kauffmann Hall****June and August/September**

Generally considered to be the most important Schubert festival in the world, this alpine festival presents a multitude of events across two different venues, encompassing song recitals, piano recitals, chamber and orchestral concerts, lectures, exhibitions and masterclasses. Mezzo Sophie Reinert opens this year's Hohenems programme with a Baroque recital accompanied by theorbo player David Bergmüller. There is also a concert of Schubert's sacred music – soloists are joined by the Minetti Quartet, double bassist Josef Gilgenreiner and organist Johannes Hämmerle. Schwarzenberg concerts include Schubert, Haydn and Mozart from Cuarteto Casals and Clemens Hagen.

schubertiade.at**Septembre Musical Montreux-Vevey****September 1-9**

Under the artistic direction of Tobias Richter, this year's festival focuses on Russia. Valery Gergiev conducts the Mariinsky Orchestra in three performances in the Stravinsky Auditorium, including one featuring Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No 2 with whoever wins Gold at the Tchaikovsky Competition in June as its soloist. Mikhail Pletnev conducts the National Orchestra of Russia in two performances, including the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with soloist Alexandra Conunova. The Glinka Choir presents a programme of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninov, and there's a piano recital from Boris Berezovsky, while the Musical Olympus concert in Chillon Castle presents the new generation of Russian virtuosos.

septmus.ch**Stresa Festival****July 13 – September 8**

Under the artistic directorship of Gianandrea Noseda, a host of concerts are performed on or near Lake Maggiore. Music mixes with theatre, dance, literature and film for an exhilarating cultural experience.

stresafestival.eu**Suoni dal Gofò****August 10-24**

This festival of music and poetry is under the artistic direction of Italian conductor Gianluca Marciànò. It's based in his seaside hometown of Lerici, with a programme inspired by the sea and the poets who were drawn to its coastline, and also features a summer residency for young musicians, the Orchestra Excellence. Highlights for 2019 include Marciànò conducting the

Orchestra Excellence in the world premiere of David Winkler's 'Lerici' Symphony, Elgar's Cello Concerto with soloist Victor Julien Laferrière, and a Mozart Requiem in memory of the Genova bridge victims.

suonidalgolfo.com**Trasimeno Music Festival****June 29 – July 5**

Established by pianist Angela Hewitt, this Umbrian festival hosts richly varied concerts take place in atmospheric venues such as the Basilica Superiore di San Francesco in Assisi, the Castle of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in Magione and the National Gallery of Umbria in Perugia. Artists this year include Il Pomo d'Oro, the Coro Sinfonico di Milano Giuseppe Verdi directed by Matthew Halls, sopranos Anu and Piia Koms, mezzo Anna Bonitatibus, tenor Diego Godoy, bass Christian Senn, pianist Gloria Campaner, clarinettist Mark Simpson, the Camerata RCO, soprano Emöke Baráth, and harpsichordist and conductor Francesco Corti.

trasimenomusicfestival.com**Verbier Festival****July 18 – August 3**

(See also our feature on page 40). Highlights this year include a centenary performance of Strauss's *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, conducted by festival music director Valery Gergiev and with a cast featuring Brandon Jovanovich, Matthias Goerne and Nina Stemme, making her festival debut. World premieres include Thomas Adès's *Three Berceuses* for viola and piano, and visiting artists include violinists Leonidas Kavakos and Renaud Capuçon, cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, and pianist Daniil Trifonov. Tune in via medici.tv, RTS Espace 2, Radio Classique, IDAGIO, DakApp and Idéale audience.

verbierfestival.com/en/**'Venice' Easter Festival at the Elbphilharmonie****April 17-23**

The Hamburg Elbphilharmonie's third Easter festival looks to Venice. Featuring historic Venetian figures such as Vivaldi, Gabrieli and Monteverdi, and also contemporary composers such as Luigi Nono and Olga Neuwirth, the six concerts in the Grand Hall include Fabio Biondi directing Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and a programme entitled *The Sound of San Marco* with the Vocalconsort Berlin and the Capella de la Torre.

elbphilharmonie.de/en/festivals/venice/390**Verona Arena Opera Festival****June 21 – September 7**

The Arena di Verona is the spectacular setting for this Italian opera festival. A new production of Verdi's *La traviata* opens 2019,

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY**Tsinandali Festival****September 8-22**

Tsinandali Festival is a brand-new festival in Georgia under the musical direction of Gianandrea Noseda, founded by George Ramishvili (Chairman of the Silk Road Group), Martin Engstroem (Verbier Festival founder) and Avi Shoshani (Verbier Festival founder and Secretary General of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra). At its heart is the Pan-Caucasian Youth Orchestra and the Verbier Chamber Orchestra Music Academy for young musicians from the extended area. The festival boasts two new, state-of-the-art concert spaces: a modern 1200-capacity open amphitheatre with a retractable roof where Mahler's Symphony No 2 opens the festival, and a chamber concert hall. Then it's all about big-name visiting artists, which in this inaugural year include pianists András Schiff and Yuja Wang, violinists Pinchas Zukerman, Renaud Capuçon and Lisa Batiashvili, mandolin player Avi Avital and cellist Gautier Capuçon.

tsinandalifestival.ge

An amphitheatre with retractable roof hosts Mahler

featuring Plácido Domingo (who also takes to the stage for a gala night). The other four operas are Zeffirelli's staging of Verdi's *Il trovatore* with Anna Netrebko and Yusiv Eyvazov, Verdi's *Aida*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Puccini's *Tosca*.

arena.it**West Cork Chamber Music Festival****June 28 – July 7**

The coastal town of Bantry in County Cork plays host to a top line-up of international chamber ensembles, this year headlined by four string quartets: the Borusan, Chiaroscuro, Dahlkvist and Zaïde, with music from Beethoven and Mozart to Lera Auerbach and Vasks. Beyond concerts, the programme also features masterclasses and talks.

www.westcorkmusic.ie**Wratislavia Cantans International Festival****September 6-15**

Held in the Polish city of Wrocław, the 54th Wratislavia Cantans International Festival includes concerts at a number of venues, including the state-of-the-art National Forum of Music. Highlights include Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No 3 on September 7, and Vivaldi's *Juditha Triumphans* from Il Giardino Armonico on September 13. To conclude, Wayne Marshall conducts *Porgy and Bess*.

nfm.wroclaw.pl/en/wratislavia-cantans**Zeist Music Days International Chamber Festival & Masterclasses****August 17-31**

Held in the central Netherlands

town of Zeist, this chamber music festival is in its 30th year. Ensembles include the Jerusalem Quartet, Schumann Quartett, Belcea Quartet, Novus Quartet, Quatuor Modigliani, Animato Quartet and Busch Trio, while individual artists include violinist Alexander Pavlovsky, viola player Avri Levitan, clarinettist Sharon Kam, harpist Remy van Kesteren, horn player Morris Kliphuis, pianists Elisabeth Leonskaja and Boris Giltburg and cellist Irene Enzlin. Masterclasses are given by the members of the Jerusalem Quartet, violinist Oliver Wille, viola player Avri Levitan, cellist Alexander Rudin and movement artist Iris Goren. Masterclasses will be followed by a student concert tour.

zeistmusicdays.nlzeistermuziekdagen.nl**Zermatt Music Festival and Academy****September 6-15**

Established in 2005, this festival takes place in the picturesque Swiss Alps village under the peak of the iconic Matterhorn. It offers a programme of orchestral and chamber music that combines the resident Scharoun Ensemble Berlin, comprising Berlin Philharmonic members, with a Festival Academy of 35 or so young musicians from around the world to form the Zermatt Festival Orchestra. With rehearsals open to the public and late-night jazz, it all adds up to a very special atmosphere. Visiting soloists include violinist Renaud Capuçon, pianists Cristian Budu and Christian Zacharias, soprano Rachel Harnisch, harpsichordist Ton Koopman and the Oberwalliser Vokalensemble.

zermattfestival.com

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FESTIVAL

2019

18 MAY –
10 JUNE

MANON LESCAUT (new production) 18, 21, 25, 28, 30 May

TOSCA 19, 29 May

MESSA DI GLORIA / LE VILLI 20 May

LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST 22, 24 May

MADAMA BUTTERFLY 23, 25 May

LA RONDINE (new production) 26, 27 May

EDGAR (new production) 1, 6 June

LA BOHÈME 2.0 2, 5 June

IL TRITICO 3, 4 June

TURANDOT 7, 9 June

PUCCINI SONG RECITAL 4 June

CHRYSANTHEMUMS, OR THE DEATH OF LIÙ (world premiere) 8, 9 June

CLOSING CONCERT WITH GREGORY KUNDE 10 June

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NORTH AMERICA FESTIVALS

Aspen Music Festival and School

June 27 - August 18

This major American festival and school celebrates its 70th anniversary this year. New music includes an orchestral work by Edgar Meyer, a cello concerto by Stephen Hartke, and Andrew Norman's new string quartet premiered by the Escher Quartet. Aspen alumnus, conductor Leonard Slatkin, celebrates his 75th birthday; other highlights include pianist Daniil Trifonov presenting his programme of seminal 20th century works and James Ehnes with year two of his three-year Beethoven violin sonatas cycle. The season closes with music director Robert Spano conducting Seraphic Fire and the Colorado Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony No 2. aspenmusicfestival.com

Bard SummerScape

June 29 - August 18

Taking place at Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley, with many performances given in the Frank Gehry-designed Richard B Fisher Center, this multi-arts festival's major musical offerings occur during the Bard Music Festival, which this year celebrates its 30th anniversary. 'Korngold and his World' is a prominent theme for 2019, with concerts and discussions topped by the American premiere of a new fully staged production of *The Miracle of Heliane*. Other highlights include Evidence, A Dance Company's world-premiere productions of *Grace* and *Mercy*, two new SummerScape commissions from choreographer and company founder Ronald K Brown. As ever, the line-up is completed by a full programme of cabaret, jazz and more in Bard's Belgian Spiegeltent. fishercenter.bard.edu/summerscape/

Blossom Music Festival

June 29 - September 1

The Cleveland Orchestra's annual summer festival takes place at its summer home, Ohio's Blossom Music Center, in the beautiful grounds of Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The 51st season sees the orchestra performing a mix of classical concerts, pops and patriotic favourites, with folk and rock acts alongside. Full details weren't yet released as we went to press, so keep an eye on the website. clevelandorchestra.com

Boston Early Music Festival

June 9-16

Eight days of opera, concerts and a major early music trade show this year are themed 'Dreams and Madness'. The central opera is the North American premiere of Agostino Steffani's 1691 *Orlando generoso*, in a production by Gilbert Blin under the musical direction of Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs. The Grammy Award-winning BEMF Chamber Opera Series returns with an encore performance of its Versailles-inspired 2016 production, pairing Charpentier's *Les Plaisirs de Versailles* with Lalande's *Les Fontaines de Versailles*, alongside Divertissements from Lully's *Atys*. Concerts feature keyboard player Kristian Bezuidenhout and ensembles Sequentia, Stile Antico, Dunedin Consort and Douce Mémoire. bemf.org/2019-festival/

Bravo! Vail

June 20 - August 4

A combination of symphonic and chamber concerts, this festival is situated in the Rocky Mountains' Vail Valley. This season features the North American debut of the Chamber Orchestra Vienna-Berlin, comprised of musicians from the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics,

who play all five Mozart violin concertos with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter. Other resident orchestras are the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. There is also a chamber series that features Yefim Bronfman performing the complete Beethoven Op 10 piano sonatas, and appearances from both the Takács and St Lawrence Quartets. There's also the festival's first staged opera production: Puccini's *Tosca* with the Philadelphia Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin. bravovail.org

Britt Festival

July 26 - August 11

Three weeks of open-air concerts in Oregon's Rogue Valley under music director Teddy Abrams, this year's Britt Festival opens a new Britt co-commission from Christopher Cerrone with soloists Third Coast Percussion. Other draws include Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw, in residence both as composer and conductor, and concertos from violinist Augustin Hadelich, cellist Oliver Herbert and pianist George Li. An ecology-themed concert called 'The Rising Seas' features John Luther Adams's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Become Ocean* alongside Debussy's *La mer*. brittfest.org

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music

July 28 - August 11

Led by music director and conductor Cristian Măcelaru, America's longest-running festival of new orchestral music presents both preeminent and emerging composers, a professional orchestra and renowned international guest artists to give voice to new works. This year's festival presents three world premieres, one US premiere, and nine West Coast premieres, with 12 composers-in-residence including Preben Antonsen, Clarice Assad, Anna Clyne, Dan Dediu, Wynton Marsalis and Nina Young. Guests artists include mezzo Jamie Barton, vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, harpist Sarah Fuller and violinist Nicola Benedetti. cabrillomusic.org

Caramoor

June 15 - July 19

This seven-week multi-genre festival is based at the historic 90-acre Caramoor estate in Katonah, Westchester. Opening and closing the festival is the Orchestra of St Luke's with soloists cellist Alisa Weilerstein and violinist Christian Tetzlaff. The OSL also joins with pianist Jonathan Biss for the

New York premiere of *Watermark* by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw. Further new music comes courtesy of artists including new-music vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth, and this season's Ernst Stiefel String Quartet-in-Residence, the Omer Quartet, which premieres a new commission work by Gabriella Smith. Baroque offerings include mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux and New York Baroque Incorporated. caramoor.org

Carmel Bach Festival

July 13-27

This festival is under the artistic direction of Paul Goodwin and takes place in the California village of Carmel-by-the-Sea and the surrounding areas, with concerts in Carmel's Sunset Center and the weekly main choral event in historic Carmel Mission Basilica. Haydn's *The Creation* opens this year under the direction of Goodwin. Another highlight is a programme of traditional and contemporary Scandinavian folk music and songs, and a blending of Baroque and Swedish dance tunes, from violinist Edwin Huizinga, guitarist William Coulter, and Olov Johansson, foremost performer on the traditional Swedish *nyckelharpa*. bachfestival.org

Festival Opera Québec

July 24 - August 4

This opera festival showcases the best of international and Québécois artists. For the local community, the Lyric Brigade will be bringing popular opera arias to all corners of the city. Elsewhere, topping the offerings for 2019 is a brand-new co-production with the New York Metropolitan Opera of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, from the filmmaker François Girard; Jacques Lacombe directs a cast starring Gregory Dahl in the title-role, Johann van Oostrum as Senta, and Andreas Bauer Kanabas as Daland. Also on the bill is Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* from a cast of up-and-coming Canadian singers and an afternoon of Viennese operetta. festivaloperaquebec.com

Glimmerglass Festival

July 6 - August 24

The Glimmerglass Festival presents four mainstage productions of opera and musical theatre every summer in its lakeside theatre in the heart of central New York. The festival opens with Francesca Zambello's production of *Show Boat*. Classical offerings begin in style the following evening with Verdi's *La traviata* in a new co-production, also from Zambello, with Washington National Opera, The Atlanta Opera, Seattle

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Chelsea Music Festival

June 6-15

The 10th season of this lower-Manhattan festival is themed '200° Due Clara', inspired by the 200th anniversary of the birth of Clara Schumann, and includes new commissions from 10 female composers. Events take place throughout the Chelsea neighbourhood of New York City, and feature a mix of classical, jazz, and contemporary music as well as lectures, walking tours and family events. There are also two exciting new venue partners in Chelsea: at High Line Nine, visual artist-in-residence Julianne Swartz exhibits her 'Sine Body' sound sculptures, while at Hauser & Wirth gallery a composer has been commissioned to respond to Brooklyn-born artist Lorna Simpson's exhibit. chelseamusicfestival.org



Late-night jazz at St Peter's on W 20th St

NORTH AMERICA FESTIVAL GUIDE 2019

Opera and Indiana University. There's also classical comedy by way of *The Ghosts of Versailles*, with music by John Corigliano. glimmerglass.org

Grand Teton Music Festival

July 3 - August 17

Founded in 1962, this seven-week festival of orchestral concerts, chamber music, recitals and community engagement takes place in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, at the foothills of the breathtaking Teton Mountain Range. The 2019 festival, begins with Orff's *Carmina Burana* under the baton of festival music director Donald Runnicles. Visiting soloists and chamber musicians include pianists Yefim Bronfman, Stephen Hough and Denis Kozhukin, violinists Hilary Hahn and Augustin Hadelich, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, the Takács Quartet, LA Guitar Quartet, and saxophonist Branford Marsalis. gtmf.org

June in Buffalo

June 3-9

Hosted by the University at Buffalo's Department of Music with the Robert and Carol Morris Center for 21st Century Music and under the direction of David Felder, June in Buffalo is a festival and conference dedicated to composers. It offers an intensive schedule of seminars, lectures, workshops and open rehearsals as well as concerts open to the general public and critics. Each invited composer has one piece performed during the festival. This year they are Anna Clyne, Brian Ferneyhough, Stephen Hartke, Lei Lang and Rolf Wallin. music21c.org

Marlboro Music

July 13 - August 11

With pianists Mitsuko Uchida and Jonathan Biss as joint music directors, this rural Vermont chamber festival gives young professionals the opportunity to collaborate with mature artists in a mentoring relationship. After three weeks of daily rehearsals, the artists present the results of their collaborations in public concerts. marlboromusic.org

Mostly Mozart Festival

July - August

A summertime tradition in New York, this festival run by Lincoln Center always offers big names and an array of different styles and venues. Programme details for 2019 were not available as we went to press, so keep an eye on the website. mostlymozart.org

Music Academy of the West

June 17 - August 10

A highlight of this eight-week festival in beautiful Santa Barbara is the debut of the London Symphony Orchestra, with its conductor

laureate Michael Tilson Thomas. Other featured artists include pianists Pierre-Laurent Aimard and Jeremy Denk, flautist Claire Chase, mezzo Isabel Leonard and bassist Edgar Meyer. The Academy Festival Orchestra is directed by Marin Alsop, Matthias Pintscher and Larry Rachleff. Another highlight is the West Coast premiere of Jennifer Higdon's opera *Cold Mountain*. musicacademy.org

Music@Menlo Chamber Music Festival & Institute

July 12 - August 3

Under the artistic directorship of David Finckel and Wu Han, the festival is based in Menlo School in Atherton, California. 'Incredible Decades' is the theme for 2019, tracing 300 years of musical evolution from Bach to the new millennium. The festival opens with Bach Ascending, a programme celebrating Baroque masters from the great JS to the lesser-known Evaristo Felice Dall'Abaco, featuring Orchestra of St Luke's principal oboist James Austin Smith. End-of-festival performances include Mark O'Connor's *FC's Jig* for violin and viola featuring veteran Music@Menlo viola player Paul Neubauer. musicatmenlo.org

Off the Hook Arts

June 17 - July 17

Based in Fort Collins, Colorado, and under the artistic direction of Bruce Adolphe, the 2019 theme 'Perception/Deception, Illusion/Confusion' brings together music, neuroscience, psychology, magic, comedy, painting and photography. Classical highlights include the final concert, 'Haunted Music', where violinist Kyu-Young Kim, cellist Käthe Jarka, and pianist Marija Stroke seek out the ghosts inhabiting the works of Saariaho, Haydn and Beethoven, and the Miami Quartet and cellist Matt Zalkind premiere Adolphe's new cello quintet, *Are there not a Thousand Forms of Sorrow*, a co-commission with the Chamber Music Society to celebrate its 50th anniversary season. offthehookarts.org

Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival

July 14 - August 19

Against the backdrop of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the festival presents six weeks of concerts, recitals, masterclasses, youth concerts and open rehearsals. There are all sorts of firsts this year, including violinist Ida Kavafian and pianist Peter Serkin performing a complete cycle of Beethoven's violin sonatas for the first time in the festival's history. There are festival debuts from mezzo Christianne Stotijn and New York City Ballet's principal oboe Randall Wolfgang, among others. Returning artists

FOCUS EVENT: INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY

Ravinia Festival

May 31 - September 15

It's a big year for America's oldest music festival in terms of its community and outreach work: it's opening an immersive 'Experience Center' to help introduce audiences to classical music. In total, the festival presents

140 events including the annual summer residency of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Its expansive Bernstein celebration continues with the composer's final protégé, Marin Alsop, conducting a command encore of *Mass* featuring 200 artists, from the CSO to the local high school band. She will also lead the rarely performed *Trouble in Tahiti*. The Knights will present Ravinia's first full *Candide*, and the CSO will perform live to the films *On the Waterfront* and *West Side Story*. Away from Bernstein, winners of the second annual 'Bridges' competition for Jazz/Classical fusion composers will receive world premieres; Jennifer Hudson makes her CSO debut headlining Ravinia's annual gala; and Renée Fleming and the Emersons join forces for the Chicago premiere of *Penelope*, the new piece by the late André Previn, co-commissioned by Ravinia. ravinia.org



Lawn screenings feature soundtracks played live

include mezzo Susan Graham, pianist Inon Barnatan, viola player Paul Neubauer, and the Dover, Escher, Miami and Orion Quartets. There are world premieres of three string quartets by Grammy-nominated Michael Gandolfi. santafechambermusic.com

Ojai Music Festival

June 6-10

A different music director curates this southern California festival each year; for 2019 it's Barbara Hannigan. Under her leadership the festival welcomes resident ensemble Ludwig along with members of Equilibrium (EQ) mentoring initiative in their US debuts. Hannigan herself conducts a semi-staged production of Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* from Linus Fellbom, and is soprano soloist in Schoenberg's String Quartet No 2 and the US premiere of John Zorn's *Jumalattaret*, among other highlights. ojaifestival.org

Spoletto Festival

May 24 - June 9

Charleston, South Carolina, is the host town for this famous multi-arts festival. Classical music highlights include a performance of Bach's *St John Passion* by the Spoleto Festival USA Orchestra, Westminster Choir and Charleston Symphony Orchestra Chorus conducted by Joe Miller, and another programme from the Festival Orchestra of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. The Bank of America Chamber Music series returns, with the world premiere of composer-in-residence Paul Wiancko's oboe quintet for James Austin Smith and the St Lawrence Quartet. Further returning artists include countertenor Anthony Roth

Costanzo, flautist Tara Helen O'Connor, tenor Paul Groves, and pianists Inon Barnatan, Pedja Muzijevic and Stephen Prutsman. spoletousa.org

Tanglewood

June 15 - August 25

Tanglewood is the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. BSO music director Andris Nelsons presides over the opening night, which features pianist Emanuel Ax, and the BSO-commissioned world premiere of Kevin Puts's *The Brightness of Light* with soprano Renée Fleming and baritone Rod Gilfry. There are Tanglewood debuts from mezzo Joyce DiDonato and conductor Antonio Pappano; other artists include trumpeter Håkan Hardenberger, cellist Gautier Capuçon and pianist Paul Lewis. Nelsons leads the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in *Die Walküre*, and Yo-Yo Ma plays Bach's Six Solo Cello Suites over the course of an evening. bso.org

Tippet Rise

July 12 - September 7

Tippet Rise Art Center is based near Montana's Beartooth Mountains. Its main concert venue is the 150-seat Olivier Music Barn, with outdoor performances taking place next to striking sculptural structures. Highlights include the world premiere of John Luther Adams's *Lines Made By Walking* (String Quartet No 5), performed by the Jack Quartet in its Tippet Rise debut. Returning artists include pianists Stephen Hough, violinist Paul Huang and the St Lawrence and Escher string quartets. tippetrise.org

Festival d'opéra de Québec



**July 24 to
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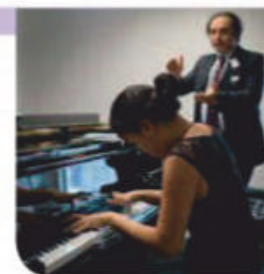
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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Edward Seckerson salutes a vivid and incisive account of Mahler's Seventh Symphony from the Budapest Festival Orchestra and Iván Fischer



Mahler

Symphony No 7

Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics   CCSSA38019

(75' • DDD/DSD)

I honestly can't remember hearing a performance of this extraordinary symphony that was so plainly in love with its ethos, its originality, its sonority. Iván Fischer reads the 'small print' of the score with such thoroughness that he makes most other readings feel like generalisations by comparison. It's one of those performances that makes one think of the piece differently, and that in itself is cause for celebration and reassessment.

So one hears the opening of the first movement not as something strangely abstract but as a different kind of funeral march (heaven knows Mahler was the master purveyor of them), one with its roots firmly in the dotted rhythms of the Baroque but with the archaic tenor horn suggesting a deeper and darker primitivism. The bounding second theme counters rudely, a jaunty militarism (the nearby barracks of Mahler's youth?) as crass as it is melodramatic. Nothing so far prepares us for the second subject, as bittersweet as anything Mahler ever wrote – and Fischer and his wonderful Budapest Festival Orchestra nurse every phrase as if they too were entirely unprepared to find it on the page. It is that sense of discovery in the playing that is a feature of the performance throughout. Fischer addresses all the incongruities of the piece like he is determined to find logic in their strangeness, method in their madness.



'It's a performance full of first-time wonder that transcends the painstaking preparation that will have gone into the making of it'

Take the mysterious central section of the first movement. Fischer goes beyond the pictorial to suggest an added dimension: Mahler lost in the remote regions of his imagination while further

remnants of his childhood – those militaristic fanfares again – vaguely intrude. But the blossoming of the second subject is the more visionary for it and when the recapitulation brings back the jaunty second theme Fischer opens it out spectacularly as if to give it a renewed significance. Remember that it is this theme that will dominate the symphony's peroration.

If the Seventh stands apart from every other Mahler symphony it is in greater part because of its inner movements – music of the night in every sense. Even as its solo horn (marvellous here, by the way) is recalling the Fifth Symphony Scherzo at the opening of the second-movement 'Nachtmusik I', a lurid helter-skelter of woodwinds is pulling the rug from beneath us and unveiling a spooky night patrol. The incongruity of the waltz which counters it is a sudden rewind to the age of innocence and experience. Fischer reminds us how rich in incident this movement is.

Then comes the central Scherzo, as fantastical a beauty-and-the-beast creation as Mahler ever penned. Have those slippery glissando effects in the strings ever been thrown into greater relief; have the assorted belches and grunts and descents to the rudest lower reaches of the contrabassoon ever sounded more like spook-house apparitions? Pathos and bathos, the lovely and decidedly unlovely – Fischer relishes it all. And the exquisitely scored guitar- and mandolin-flecked 'Nachtmusik II' conveying fragility and wistfulness in spades is not just beautiful but for once truly touching. Here and everywhere it's a performance full of first-time wonder in which the natural



Sense of discovery: Fischer and his orchestra nurse every phrase



Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra relish Mahler's pathos and bathos, with an account that is not just beautiful but intensely moving

sympiosis between Fischer and his players completely transcends the painstaking preparation that will have gone into the making of it.

The finale doesn't sound problematic or fitful at all. This wacky cavalcade, this apotheosis of the dance, has celebration written all over it, progressing like an assembling of the guilds in the final scene of *Die Meistersinger* while simultaneously suggesting a Baroque dance suite projected into the 20th century. The fanfare-like opening on timpani and trumpets is at once ancient and modern. Fischer and his orchestra attend the robustness and elegance, the riotous and graceful like the rules needed breaking. Country dancing collides with courtly minuets. No concessions are made to period or manners. It's a kind of cosmic knees-up.

The trick is to make all those tricky juxtapositions and technically treacherous transitions sound jaw-droppingly spontaneous. And Fischer does just that. Others have done so before, of course – notably his brother Adám in his quite recent account with the Düsseldorf Symphony (AVI-Music, 1/17; together they are taking ownership of this composer) – but there is a joyousness about this account that tells you not just how much Iván Fischer loves this symphony but how he loves it unconditionally.

In the thrilling coda he resists the ritardando into what I like to call 'the expensive moment' until the horns have peaked and he can pull out all the stops in the trumpets for the final crescendo. It stops you in your tracks. One last surprise – after a succession of them. **G**

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Edward Seckerson hears the latest Shostakovich from Andris Nelsons:

'The long first movement of the Sixth Symphony completely wrong-footed the powers-that-be in Stalin's Soviet Union' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 68**



Charlotte Gardner listens to recorder player Lucie Horsch:

'Horsch's technique was always immaculate, but there's been a clear growth in naturalness and confidence' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**

Adès

Colette

Original Motion Picture Soundtrack

Lakeshore © LK535352 (40' • DDD)



Thomas Adès has composed his first film score, for *Colette*, a biopic based on the *Claudine* novels by the French writer, with Keira Knightley in the title-role.

The film was the dream project of the director Wash Westmoreland and his choice of Adès to compose the soundtrack, though an unlikely one given the recent paucity of classical composers working in this medium, is nevertheless welcome and, it has to be said, works like a dream. In addition to music drawn from Saint-Saëns, Satie and Debussy, Adès has composed his own group of salon miniatures with the lightest of touches to complement the era from the belle époque ('*Claudine à l'École Print*') to the dawn of modernism ('*Claudine à Paris*').

Colette opens with a gorgeous waltz tune, built from fragments later developed, that floats into view on Snow Globe, before returning to its nebulous state. A slow variation appears in the Impressionistic 'The Lake', then in full party dress in 'Claudine's Journey', where this winningly scored waltz stakes claim to be mentioned in the same breath as Richard Rodney Bennett's *Murder on the Orient Express*. A second waltz in plusher chiaroscuro, 'Valse du salon', with variants elsewhere, evokes Parisian interiors c1900. Adès has a lot of fun with his 'Dream of Egypt'. This Egyptian-style tableau, where Colette dances with ever more abandon, unleashes the image of a snake charmer as it gathers pace under a canopy of exotic orchestration. A delicately scored sequence from track 19 onwards introduces a wistful new theme taken up by the clarinet and featuring harp and strings in luminous settings. The elegiac threnody for 'Jules Colette's Burial' stands in contrast to

'Willy's Arrival', the music that profiles the raffish figure of Henry Gauthier-Villars, Colette's first husband, played by Dominic West.

All this music is lovingly played by a group of hand-picked musicians, led by Jacqueline Shave, in homage to a lady who was an iconoclast of her age, newly minted for our time by Adès. **Adrian Edwards**

Arriaga

Symphonie à grand orchestre. Air de l'opéra

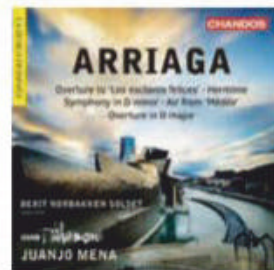
Médée^a. Los esclavos felices - Overture.

Herminie^a. Overture, Op 20

^a**Berit Norbakken Solset** sop

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Juanjo Mena

Chandos © CHAN20077 (68' • DDD)



Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga (1806-26) was 13 when he composed the opera *Los esclavos*

felices. Only the overture survives, alas, and from the Arcadian atmosphere of the introductory pastorella to the Rossini-esque wit of the *Allegro assai*, it's a delight. Here we're given the 1821 revision, made after the Bilbao-born wunderkind had moved to Paris to study with François-Joseph Fétis. Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic sound sleepy compared with Mackerras (Hyperion, 11/95) or Cassuto (Naxos, 12/03), but immediately thereafter, in the expectant orchestral preface to the cantata *Herminie*, their playing is alert and characterful, as it is throughout the remainder of the programme.

Herminie provides ample evidence of Arriaga's keen dramatic instincts and ability to paint a scene. Note the sense of an icy chill in the air when, in the second recitative, the heroine finds her beloved seemingly slain on the battlefield, and the expressive, awed harmonies when she discovers he's alive in the final section. In the *Air de Médée* – a stand-alone setting of an aria from the same libretto used by Cherubini – Arriaga effectively juxtaposes complex, florid passages with simpler,

more emotionally direct ones. Berit Norbakken Solset sings both works vividly, and her fresh tone and satiny legato are delectable.

The BBC Philharmonic winds relish the felicitous solos in both the D major Overture and the Symphony, and although Mackerras and Cassuto offer excellent accounts of the latter, Mena's has charms of its own. He finds a play of light and shade in first movement's *Allegro vivace*, with its alternation of major and minor that's evocative of yet so distinct from Schubert's. And the slow movement is really very beautifully done, particularly the *sotto voce* opening. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

JS Bach

Violin Concertos – BWV1042; BWV1052;

BWV1056. Concerto for Oboe and Violin,

BWV1060^a. Concerto for Two Violins, BWV1043.

Cantata No 21 – Sinfonia^a. Cantata No 174 –

Sinfonia. Cantata No 182 – Sonata. Trio Sonatas –

No 3, BWV527; No 5, BWV529. Orchestral Suite

No 2, BWV1067

Isabelle Faust vn ^a**Xenia Löffler** ob **Akademie**

für Alte Musik Berlin / Bernhard Forck

Harmonia Mundi © (two CDs for the price of one)

HMM90 2335/6 (144' • DDD)



That Isabelle Faust and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin have let this Bach violin

concertos album run to nearly 2½ hours of music suggests a relish of their task that is mirrored triumphantly in the resultant music-making. Their choice of repertoire, too, feels driven by a desire to celebrate Bach's life with the violin rather than document it. If they had wanted to be pedantically completist about it, we would have the Fifth *Brandenburg* and the Triple Concerto; instead we get the three known violin concertos plus the three most convincing reconstructions from harpsichord concertos, supplemented by a reconstruction of the putative early violin version of the B minor Flute Suite, and all



Keen dramatic instincts: the music of Juan Crisóstomo de Arriaga is given strong advocacy by Juanjo Mena and the BBC Philharmonic

neatly interspersed with arrangements of two of the organ sonatas and a clutch of cantata sinfonias (including the rarely heard, trumpet-and-drum-laden BWV1045, a violin concerto movement of some flashiness).

Everything here is energy, though the exuberance is of the grounded kind that never gets out of hand. Tempos are brisk; but while there's certainly not much risk of listeners thinking any of them too slow, neither does any one of them sound too fast, at least not the way they are performed here. Faust's playing is technically brilliant, yet always at the service of the music, and everywhere enlivened by a richly varied repertoire of interpretative details, from spontaneous twiddle-ornaments to little tempo-tugs or deftly elongated notes within a phrase. From her 1658 Stainer she produces a sound that is period-instrument clean (even at times a little wiry), but can summon warmth of tone and tonal strength when she wants. And together she and this superb orchestra show exemplary contrapuntal clarity while also outlining the music's architecture through glinting dynamic changes or compelling long-range crescendos and diminuendos. A word should go, too, to Xenia Löffler, whose

liquid-gold oboe-playing is a perfect foil for Faust's busy violin in BWV1060 and a perfect match for its aching beauty of the Sinfonia from Cantata No 21. In short, without being tempted to eccentricity, these performances reveal keen musical minds constantly at work.

The deeper delight of it all is that you can encounter subtle new aspects in the familiar works – the E major Concerto intimate, even a little withdrawn, the slow movement of the A minor given a lightly pulsing, march-like momentum – and real revelations in the lesser-known ones. I'm not sure I've ever heard the reconstructed concertos sound so convincing (especially the D minor), the trio sonatas go at a thrilling lick that surely no organ could keep up with and the sinfonias simply gleam. This is a hugely enjoyable celebration of Bach – himself a violinist – which conjures not so much the strict contrapuntal and formal genius as the joyous spirit of the living man. **Lindsay Kemp**

Brahms • Parry

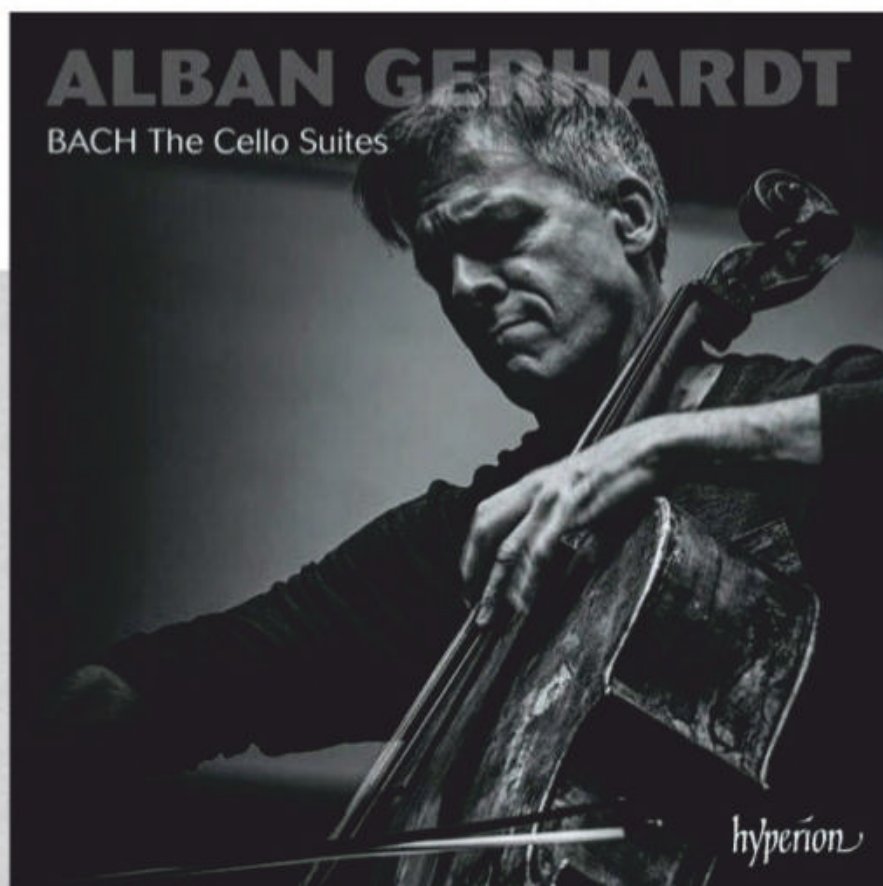
Brahms Piano Quartet No 1, Op 25
(orch Schoenberg) **Parry** Elegy for Brahms
Gävle Symphony Orchestra / Jaime Martín
Online © ODE1314-2 (53' • DDD)



Schoenberg gives the first melodic phrase of Brahms's G minor Piano Quartet to three clarinets (the common instrument in B flat, plus a bass clarinet and its higher cousin in E flat), creating an over-saturated tone colour that's distinctly Schoenbergian – it's as if he wanted his imprint stamped firmly on the arrangement from the very start. Jaime Martín revels in these marvellously lurid sonorities, pushing the woodwinds to the fore, and generally eliciting incisive, articulate playing from the Gävle orchestra. String tone can be wan at times – I'd prefer the expansive melody in the cellos at 1'48" in the first movement to be sung more richly, for instance – and particularly when considered alongside Rattle's opulently appointed account with the Berlin Philharmonic (EMI, 10/11).

Martín's tempos are wholly convincing throughout. He paces the opening *Allegro* far more broadly than Schoenberg's (not Brahms's) crotchet=132 metronome mark but still maintains a flowing pace. Indeed, the sense of inexorable forward movement

hyperion



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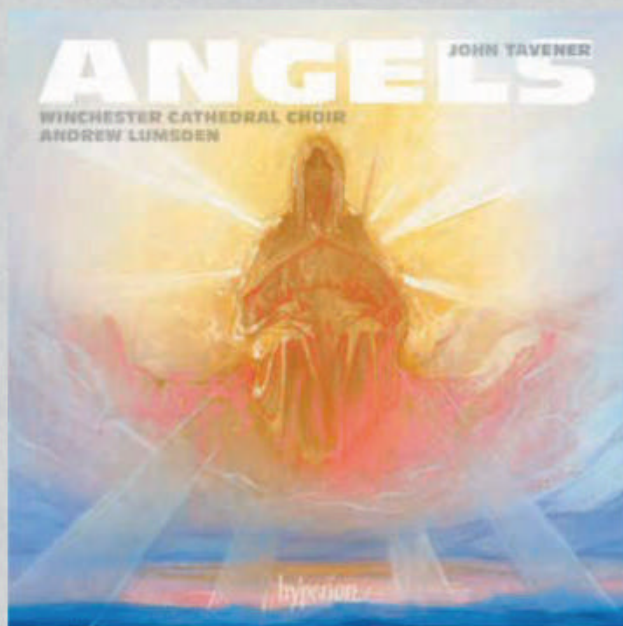
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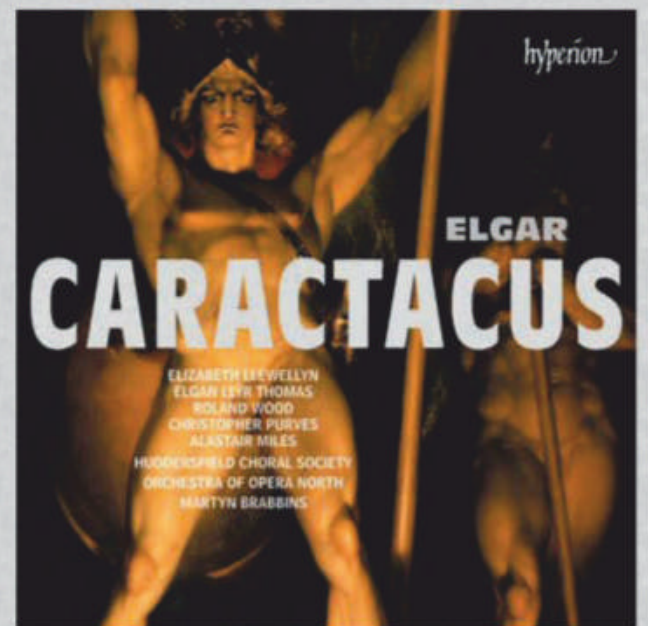
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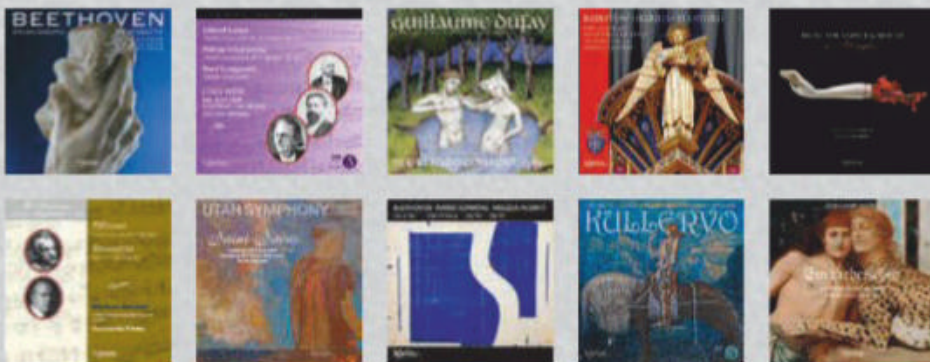
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Elgar: Caractacus
HUDDERSFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY
ORCHESTRA OF OPERA NORTH
MARTYN BRABBINS conductor



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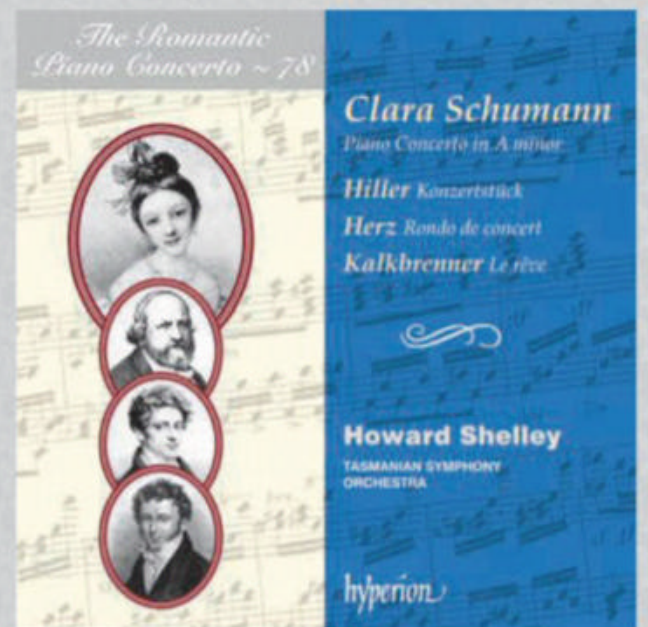
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Lassen, Scharwenka & Langgaard: Violin Concertos Linus Roth (violin), BBC Scottish SO, Antony Hermus
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is consistent. Perhaps the *Rondo alla zingarese* finale is more of an *allegro* than the marked *presto*, but it still generates plenty of excitement thanks to rhythmic tautness and generous dollops of peppery accents. I do wish more care had been given to dynamic contrasts in the third movement, but it's so passionately played that such minor cavils are easily overlooked.

Parry's *Elegy for Brahms* is an unexpected yet apt coupling, and I believe this to be the finest recorded interpretation thus far. Martín stakes a middle ground between the almost desperate urgency of Boult's pioneering version (EMI, 11/79) and the plaintive nobility of Bamert's (Chandos, 9/91). In the exquisite final pages (starting around 9'58"), the elegiac radiance of the orchestra's performance feels positively transfigurative. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Britten · Mendelssohn · Tchaikovsky

Britten Violin Concerto, Op 15

Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, Op 64

Tchaikovsky Sérénade mélancolique, Op 26

Sebastian Bohren *vn* **Royal Liverpool**

Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Litton

RCA Red Seal © 19075 87114-2 (71' • DDD)



Knowing Sebastian Bohren's playing from his gripping recording of Hartmann's

Concerto funebre (6/17) and as leader of the superb Stradivari Quartet, I was surprised he sounds so emotionally disconnected on this new disc. The Swiss violinist's silvery, tensile tone is well suited to the Mendelssohn Concerto but I find his phrasing prosaic throughout. Certainly there's little sense of *molto appassionato* in the first movement, as the composer demands. Bohren's leisurely tempo is no excuse; Perlman's similarly paced account with Previn (EMI, 1/74) burns with an inner fire. The *Andante* is plainspoken to a fault; and while he plays tenderly in the transition to the finale, the finale itself lacks buoyancy and sparkle.

Bohren's Britten is even more disappointing, I'm sorry to say. It begins well, with Litton and the RLPO swooning over the first sighing phrases, yet when Bohren enters, he seems to be holding back in both tempo and feeling. The extended, obsessively ruminative passage at 6'17" in the first movement, for example, is so rhythmically stodgy it sounds becalmed. There are some occasional flashes of fireworks in the Scherzo but it's not

nearly terrifying enough. And while Litton invests the finale's passacaglia theme with a lyrical intensity that brought the threnody near the end of Mahler's Sixth to mind, Bohren answers matter-of-factly. Overall, I've the sense that Bohren wants to knit himself into the symphonic fabric – unlike, say, Vilde Frang, who seems to want to tear herself away. Indeed, Frang demonstrates how emotionally wrenching this score can be on her no-holds-barred *Gramophone* Award-winning recording (Warner Classics, 2/16). Bohren's style is not nearly as physical, it's true, but a more traditional interpretation can also have the power to haunt. Vengerov, for example, connects the work to its Romantic antecedents and plays his heart out doing it (EMI, 7/03). At least Bohren's poignantly aspirational tone (from 10'18") makes something memorable of the final pages.

Tchaikovsky's *Sérénade mélancolique* might have fit more happily between the Mendelssohn and Britten than as an encore but here again Bohren's phrasing is lacking in expressive shape and detail.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Bruckner

Symphony No 9 (1894 original version)

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900173 (57' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, January 13-17, 2014



Mariss Jansons's recent recording of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra (BR-Klassik, 9/18) was an impressive achievement in every respect but I don't feel this account of the Ninth Symphony from three years earlier is quite on the same level. Interpretatively, there's little difference between Jansons's approach on this new release and the previously released recording on RCO Live deriving from his performances with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra just two months later. Both recordings are swifter in the outer movements than we usually hear these days, harking back to a time when conductors such as Rosbaud and Schuricht regularly led performances of the symphony lasting well under an hour. Both are also beautifully played, as might be expected with orchestras of this calibre. Dynamic and tempo markings are observed with a remarkable degree of fidelity and orchestral textures are both warm and

revealing of inner detail. There are even the same conductor vocalisations on both recordings – very faint, but noticeable when listening on headphones.

If forced to choose between the two versions, I'd probably plump for the newcomer on account of its marginally more vivid sound. Collectors are, however, spoilt for choice in this symphony, with recordings by the likes of Barenboim, Karajan and Wand bringing the listener closer to the heart of this most intense and original of Bruckner's works.

Christian Hoskins

Selected comparison:

RCO, Jansons (RCOL) RCO16001

Finnis

The Air, Turning^a. Between Rain^b. Elsewhere^c.

Four Duets^d. Parallel Colour^e. Shades Lengthen^f

^dMark Simpson *cl* ^fBenjamin Beilman, ^eEloisa-Fleur

Thom *vn* ^dVíkingur Ólafsson *pf* ^eBirmingham

Contemporary Music Group / Richard Baker;

^aBBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra / Ilan Volkov;

^bBritten Sinfonia / Andrew Gourlay; ^bLondon

Contemporary Orchestra / Robert Ames

NMC Debut © NMCD249 (71' • DDD)



Edmund Finnis (b1984) teaches composition at the Royal Academy of

Music and is Composer-in-Residence with the London Contemporary Orchestra, for whom he wrote the fine string-orchestral essay *Between Rain* (2014), included on this NMC Debut disc. The only other music of his on disc I can trace are Variation 10, the penultimate item of the collaborative *Panufnik Variations* (LSO Live, 6/16) and the viola study *Veneer* (London Sinfonietta, 2/13).

These six works provide a good perspective of his compositional range. The biggest, though not the longest piece is *The Air, Turning* (2016), a full-orchestral tone poem taking its title from a line in Robin Robertson's poem 'Finding the keys'. As a study in sound, of the impact of sound upon the air, it is fascinating but has a preludial feel and breaks off just as one expects a larger movement to follow. This is a recurrent trait of Finnis's style.

Much of his music is quiet and texturally spare, not unlike Laurence Crane's but with a good deal more going on – as in *Elsewhere* (2015), where Eloisa-Fleur Thom's beautifully played violin is 'accompanied' by reverb only, or the delicate *Four Duets* for clarinet and piano (2012), exquisitely played by Mark Simpson and Víkingur Ólafsson. Finnis's acute ear

for sonority is demonstrated in *Parallel Colour* (2015), seven brief movements (only the central fourth has an extended span, just over four minutes) employing mirror techniques and exquisitely scored. However, Finnis does not display instrumental cleverness merely for its own sake, as *Shadows Lengthen* (2015), four movements towards a violin concertino, amply confirm.

The performances throughout are nicely done and NMC has engineered them (made at four locations at different times) very well to sound of a piece. An intriguing disc of a composer to watch. **Guy Rickards**

Haydn · Vivaldi

Haydn Cello Concertos, HobVIIb – No 1; No 2

Vivaldi Concerto for Violin and Cello, RV547^a

Christoph Croisé *vc* Eurasian Soloists Chamber Orchestra / Sherniyaz Mussakhan *av*

Avie © AV2402 (58' • DDD)



This conductor-less release from Avie manages to capture something too often

lost in recordings of the early cello concerto repertoire: fun. With the brilliance of steel strings – no sheep were harmed in its making – the Eurasian Soloists Chamber Orchestra encapsulate the phrase, ‘a band that plays together, plays together’. This delightful sense of the social and chamber music-making infuses producer Joël Cormier’s mix.

His first recording of a cello concerto from the canon, Christoph Croisé’s offering of Haydn’s Concerto No 1 in C is an act of humility met with stunning virtuosity. The first movement, on the steadier side of *moderato*, is majestic. Croisé plays with the benevolence of an 18th-century king, spinning phrases of loving length, generous in resonance and appoggiatura. The insouciant grace of the recapitulation – ‘yes, I have returned, and so?’ – is enviously stylish; one can feel the breeze from the French-Swiss-German’s hair flick. And amid bullet-fire precision, the percussive slap of flesh against fingerboard reminds us that Croisé makes this all sound so easy. The Concerto in D, the lesser known of the Haydn pair, makes for almost equal enjoyment. Though Croisé leaves the operatic diva at the door, and thankfully so, the *Adagio* occasionally gets stuck in wistfulness. Nevertheless, these are cycles of fifths I would gladly be trapped in for longer.

The recording finishes with Vivaldi’s Concerto for violin and cello, RV547, in

which leader Sherniyaz Mussakhan joins Croisé as soloist. Hot on the heels of La Serenissima’s recording (Vladimir Waltham’s ‘luminous tone’ and even ‘silky sound’ from violinist Adrian Chandler – Avie, 9/18), the ESCO would have to deliver something impeccable to compete. The entire ensemble is spot-on, swerving in the surprises of Vivaldi’s harmonic language. Mussakhan, however, lies on the sharp side of in tune; his rubato is predictable and repetitive. But in the final *Allegro molto*, Mussakhan gives Croisé a run for his money and is everything a violinist should sound like. This is a recording teeming with sparkle and relentless in fizz. **Mark Seow**

Ibert · Massenet · Sauguet

‘French Music for Ballet’

Ibert *Les amours de Jupiter* **Massenet**

Hérodiade – Ballet Suite **Sauguet** *Les forains*

Estonian National Symphony Orchestra /

Neeme Järvi

Chandos © CHAN20132 (68' • DDD)



Browsing in a second-hand shop a dozen or so years ago, I found an ancient Chant du

Monde LP of Sauguet’s *Les forains* with the composer conducting the Lamoureux Orchestra. I knew nothing about the work but figured it was worth a dollar. I was right.

Sauguet composed this one-act ballet for the choreographer Roland Petit, and it was premiered to considerable acclaim in March 1945, just a few months after the liberation of Paris. This simple tale of a circus troupe coming to town with its various exotic acts offers ample opportunity for Sauguet to amuse and delight. Yet what’s surprising is the element of melancholy that wafts through the score, as the troupe finds the audience unappreciative. Musically, there are echoes of Satie (the ballet’s dedicatee), Ravel, Stravinsky and even Prokofiev – try the gorgeous ‘Exercices’, for example, which wouldn’t be entirely out of place in *Romeo and Juliet* – yet the overall style is quite individual. The bittersweet waltz tune, played when the troupe enters and again near the end, may be familiar to some as Sauguet later made it into a song that was recorded by Edith Piaf.

Les amours de Jupiter was also composed for Petit’s Ballet des Champs-Élysées, and premiered just a few months

after *Les forains*. The influences are similar (again Stravinsky looms large) but the effect is utterly different. Ibert’s score is considerably more complex in its harmonic and rhythmic language, and the orchestration more elaborate. Listen, say, to the intricate yet airy texture he creates in ‘Ensemble des filles’ or the Ravelian glitter in the last of Danaë’s variations.

Neeme Järvi’s interpretation of *Les forains* is affectionate and refined, much like Michel Plasson’s in a late-’70s EMI recording. I’m grateful to have a new version available; but do try to hunt down Sauguet’s enthrallingly exuberant account, made just three years after the premiere (it was briefly available on CD, I believe). Järvi also does a fine job with Ibert’s ballet, although I find Jacques Mercier’s 2014 Timpani recording even more satisfying. Mercier’s tempos are livelier and the Lorraine National Orchestra more polished. As for the ballet music from Massenet’s *Hérodiade*, sandwiched here between the two larger scores, it’s better served by a Naxos disc with Patrick Gallois and the Barcelona Symphony, who bring a Beechamesque charm to these colourful miniatures.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Ibert – selected comparison:

Lorraine Nat Orch, Mercier (TIMP) 1C1230

Massenet – selected comparison:

Barcelona SO, Gallois (NAXO) 8 573123

Karłowicz

Symphony, ‘Rebirth’, Op 7

Mieczysław Karłowicz Philharmonic Symphony

Orchestra, Szczecin / Rune Bergmann

Dux © DUX1477 (46' • DDD/DSD)



‘Romantic-nationalist’ is the description usually applied to Mieczysław

Karłowicz’s only symphony; but in fact the ‘Rebirth’ of its title relates to a spiritual rather than nationalist narrative, and a vaguely Nietzschean programme in which the symphony’s resplendent final blaze of brass and timpani portrays ‘the soul standing triumphant and serene, looking into the world ahead’. We’re not far from the world of Scriabin and the Russian Silver Age, and that’s certainly the impression given by this expansive and atmospheric new recording from Rune Bergmann and his Szczecin Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra.

Clearly, it’s meant as something of a calling card: the booklet contains only

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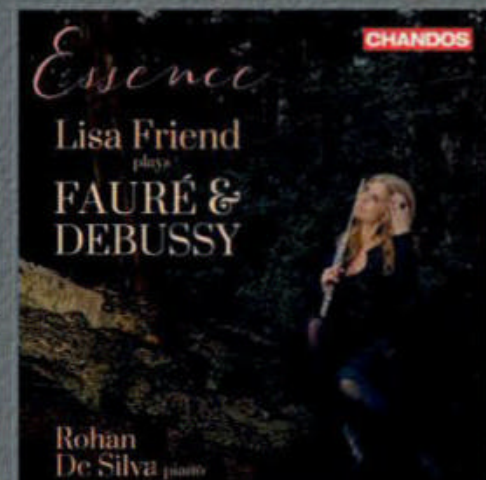


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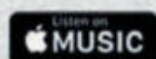
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brief programme notes but several pages of colour pictures depicting instruments of the orchestra though not, oddly, their players. No matter: the SPSO speaks for itself, and its sound is a fine rebuke to any notion that international orchestral sound is becoming homogenised. There are soft-edged central European horns, bright narrow-bore trumpets and lean but ardent strings; I particularly enjoyed the plangent solo oboe in the first movement's second group. The recorded sound is warm, with sufficient space to allow bass textures to gather like storm clouds in the symphony's more turbulent climaxes.

Bergmann's reading is broad and sometimes episodic; and although (like most recorded interpreters of this symphony) he observes the first-movement repeat, I missed the overall sense of tension and symphonic momentum that you find in Nosedá's BBC Philharmonic account (which omits the repeat). The transition from scherzo to finale felt a little hesitant; elsewhere, however, there's no shortage of passion. It's just a pity that this disc includes no coupling; Naxos and Chandos both offer music from *Bianca de Molena*. At 46 minutes, the symphony alone is unarguably short measure.

Richard Bratby

Selected comparisons:

BBC PO, Nosedá (5/04) (CHAN) CHAN10171

Warsaw PO, Wit (NAXO) 8 572487

Mahler

Symphony No 3

Sara Mingardo *contr* **Women's Choir of Schola Heidelberg; Young Singers of Cologne Cathedral; Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra / François-Xavier Roth**

Harmonia Mundi (E) (two discs for the price of one)

HMM90 5314/15 (93' • DDD • T/T)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Cologne, October 2018



Too often 'Spring marches in' to Mahler's Third with a scowl and the weight of the world already on his shoulders, with an hour and a half still to go. Not here. Our horn and trombone wanderers set out into the world with (a) spring in their step and an unpretentious sense of purpose. With a first movement majoring on local colour and fresh-faced charm, François-Xavier Roth leaves Mahler's potentially laboured metaphysics to take care of themselves in later

movements. His approach has the singular advantage of drawing the symphony's two parts together, so that the Mendelssohnian second movement gains its place in Mahler's earth-to-heaven scheme (anticipating Stockhausen's *Mittwoch*) as more than an intermezzo. Alternating the lazy drawl of a Czech waltz with *Midsummer Night's Dream* fantasy, this is one of the most appealing accounts of the movement in recent memory.

Roth points up nature-writing here and in the Scherzo just a hill or two away from both Dvořák and Mahler's friend JB Foerster, and we lose nothing by putting his much-vaunted originality in context. There are, however, more *misterioso* accounts of the posthorn solo on record, and ones where spot-miking doesn't bring you up short with a flute or clarinet in your ear just as you're contemplating the beauties of Mahler's expanding universe. So far only the Fifts have gone head to head in Harmonia Mundi's competing Mahler cycles from Harding and Roth, and the Cologne engineering has come off second best.

There is also a rather half-hearted attempt to deal with the oboe glissando implied by Mahler's much-interpreted *hinaufziehen* marking in the fourth movement. However, the sense of the symphony's direction of travel is sufficiently sure by this point for Sara Mingardo's solo to do more than bestow dignity or gaze navel-wards. There is a *Wunderhorn*-style warmth and energy to her singing that leads us naturally into the fifth movement's angelic tableau (beautifully sonorous bells, boys and girls too).

It's a rare kind of Third where Mahler's original idea to end the symphony with the child's view of heaven as eventually glimpsed through the window of the Fourth doesn't seem as absurd a misjudgement of scale as all that. This is Roth's considerable achievement, even while he brings the finale itself home as a necessary and eventually emphatic fulfilment, coaxing from the strings expression quite as daringly hushed, flexible and tender as Teodor Currentzis (a recent and engrossing SWR performance available via YouTube). If you tend towards William Walton's view that the Third is all very well, 'but you can't call that a symphony', Bernstein's and Tennstedt's spiritual testaments notwithstanding, then do give Roth a try. **Peter Quantrill**

Mendelssohn

Piano Concertos^a – No 1, Op 25; No 2, Op 40.

Rondo capriccioso, Op 14. Song Without Words, Op 19b No 6, 'Venetianisches Gondellied'.

Variations sérieuses, Op 54

Jan Lisiecki *pf*^a **Orpheus Chamber Orchestra**

DG (E) 483 6471GH (64' • DDD)



This is the third account I've had of Mendelssohn's concertos in as

many months and, from the off, the young Canadian Jan Lisiecki sparkles and shines, bringing to the opening movement of the G minor First Concerto an effortless rapport with the Orpheus CO players, with none of the over-accentuation that distracted me in Roberto Prosseda's account. The chamber-like sonorities and intricate interplay – surely the result of this being a conductor-less ensemble – are an endless delight: sample from 4'09" of track 1 for a taster. The small forces also ensure that there's an airborne quality in the fast movements, while the concerto's *Andante* is very intimate in effect. I had reservations here about both Brautigam (somewhat unpoetic) and Prosseda (too slow) but Lisiecki gets it just right, colouring and shading the line with great tenderness. And the finale, announced by fanfares from the Orpheus's splendidly coloured horns and trumpets, finds Lisiecki conveying a real sense of the dance that is infectious indeed.

In the D minor Second Concerto's *Allegro appassionato* Lisiecki and the Orpheus offer a lean-toned, high-energy account that is again very telling. But it is the *Adagio* that is particularly fine here, filled with a sense of confiding that again comes from relatively small forces. Every detail has been considered, from Lisiecki's poetic opening phrase to the answering strings, who cushion the music in a warm chorale-like sonority. I find their tempo more convincing than the otherwise compelling Hough, who seems too fast for an *Adagio*. And the finale in this new account, if not quite having the array of colours that the Cologne Academy offer Brautigam, has a real one-in-a-bar energy to it that is irresistible.

The solo pieces generally work very well too – though I did find Lisiecki slightly over-fussy in his shaping of the theme that launches the *Variations sérieuses*. But any doubt here is overcome by the lithe brilliance of what follows:



Fresh-faced charm and local colour: François-Xavier Roth and the Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra give a fulfilling account of Mahler's Third Symphony

even the most technically demanding variations (such as Var 12, which can sound overly hammered in some readings) are given with a commanding ease. I was slightly underwhelmed by his *Rondo capriccioso*, where he was a little too mannered for my taste (here Perahia is by turns entirely songful and thrillingly airborne – Sony, 5/85). But the 'Venetian Gondola Song' from the *Songs Without Words* is beautiful indeed, concluding a delightful disc.

Harriet Smith

Piano Concertos – selected comparisons:

Hough, CBSO, Foster (9/97) (HYPE) CDA66969

Brautigam, Cologne Academy, Willens

(2/19) (BIS) BIS2264

Prosseda, Hague Residentie Orch, de Vriend

(2/19) (DECC) 481 7207

Mozart

Symphonies – No 40, K550^a;

No 41, 'Jupiter', K551^b

NDR Radiophilharmonie / Andrew Manze

Pentatone ㊦ PTC5186 757

(75' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Grosser Sendesaal,

NDR Landesfunkhaus, Hanover,

^aFebruary 21-24, 2017; ^bMarch 5-8, 2018



1788 and make a common coupling on disc. Few recordings, though, differentiate their contrasting sound worlds as acutely as this one. Unlike the symphonies of, say, Beethoven, Mozart's are products of a lifetime's work in opera, both serious and comic, and sacred music on both the large and small scale, and these aspects bubble to the surface in the anguished *Sturm und Drang* of the G minor (No 40) and the *Jupiter's* progress from Burgtheater to Stephansdom.

Given his long career as an exponent of historical performance practice, Andrew Manze comes at this music as if from within, displaying a natural sensitivity to effect and *Affekt*. Speeds are judiciously chosen and are never outlandish: you will have to search elsewhere for performances that motor through these symphonies with vim and virtuoso vigour. A case in point is in the two minuets, the G minor a touch faster than the

C major, its tensile piling-on of suspensions thereby pointedly contrasted with the majesty of its trumpet-laden brother.

Manze prizes clarity, too, and the recording he has been given enables him to differentiate within and between families, so woodwind are heard only occasionally as a block and more often as colouring, shading or sustaining instruments. Their *buffo* solos in the *Jupiter* are delicious, and the juiciness of clarinets in the revised version of the G minor adds piquancy in exposed passages (the first movement's second subject) and plaintiveness in the wailing counterthemes that blow in over the outer movements' contrapuntal workings. Points are made subtly, with minute gradations of dynamic (notably in No 41's Trio) or by gentle tugs at the pulse (No 40's first-movement development). And a generous quote of repeats conspires to make that miraculous *Jupiter* coda come as the surprise interruption it always should – like the closing *presto* of the *Appassionata* or the choral entry of Mahler's *Resurrection*. No fireworks, just music-making of the highest standard, that you'd never guess was taken from concert performances. **David Thresher**

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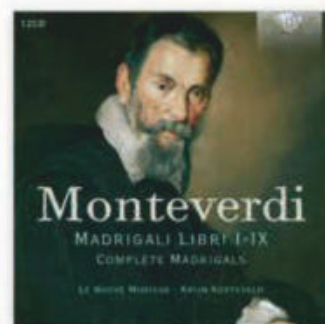
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Price

Symphonies – No 1; No 4

Fort Smith Symphony Orchestra / John Jeter

Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559827 (69' • DDD)



In addition to the harvest of death, disenfranchisement, pain and suffering inflicted by societies locked into institutionalised racism, there is also the incalculable loss of unrealised potential. Combine pervasive racism with centuries of undervaluing the contributions of women and the odds against success become all but overwhelming. This new Naxos release of the First and Fourth Symphonies by Florence Beatrice Price (1887–1953) is part of the rediscovery now under way of an African American woman who defied those odds.

A native of Little Rock, Arkansas, Price's musical education began early with her piano teacher mother. At 14 she was admitted to New England Conservatory, where she studied with George Whitefield Chadwick. In 1910 she was named head of the music department at Clark Atlanta University. Even after she and her husband moved to Chicago with their two daughters in the late 1920s, Price continued to study, notably with Leo Sowerby and Roy Harris.

Price's First Symphony was composed in 1932 for a contest sponsored by the Wanamaker Foundation and performed by the Chicago Symphony under Frederick Stock the following year. Her Fourth Symphony, composed in 1945 and recorded here for the first time, was discovered in 2009 among a sheaf of manuscripts in her former summer home on the outskirts of Chicago.

Both works exhibit a thorough familiarity with late 19th-century symphonic practice but with contemporary harmony, vibrant rhythmicity and melodic invention all their own. Presumably in all Price's symphonies (the Second is apparently lost), a juba dance replaces the scherzo as the third movement. With the exception of an allusion to the spiritual 'Wade in the water' in the first movement of the Fourth Symphony, Price does not quote folk music but evokes it through characteristic melodic and rhythmic gestures. Her handling of the orchestra is idiomatic and strikingly original, with solos generously allocated throughout the ensemble. Each symphony describes a grand emotional trajectory, over the course of four movements, from deep seriousness to redemptive joy.

The introduction or, more appropriately, restoration of Price's unique voice is unquestionably an enrichment of the American symphonic canon. **Patrick Rucker**

Prokofiev

Piano Concertos – No 1, Op 10;

No 3, Op 26; No 4, Op 53

Vadym Kholodenko *pf* Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra / Miguel Harth-Bedoya

Harmonia Mundi (M) HMM90 7632 (71' • DDD)



Compared alongside the fast and faceless performances in Vol 1 of the

Kholodenko/Harth-Bedoya/Fort Worth Prokofiev concerto cycle (3/16), Vol 2 offers noticeable improvement, if not consistent satisfaction.

In the First Concerto, the pianist tosses off the first movement's relentless machine-like passagework with driving incisiveness and characterful wit. The Impressionistic haze that Kholodenko conjures up in the *Andante assai* couldn't be more apt, stylistically speaking. However, his arch hesitations and tenutos trivialise and undermine the acerbic character of the finale's tarantella.

One can say the same for the heart-on-sleeve point-making in the Third Concerto's central variations. But the third movement's myriad tempo changes are assiduously effected and the simultaneously swirling solo/orchestra passages seem perfectly in sync. I say 'seem', because the piano unduly dominates the balance throughout, as it does in the First Concerto as well.

The piano-heavy balance is less of a problem in the Fourth Concerto, probably because of how well the orchestra shines on its own. Take, for example, the carefully gauged string balances at the second movement's outset, where Harth-Bedoya leans into the gnawing dissonances, or the brass section's ear-catching timbral diversity in the third movement (who is that fabulous first trumpeter?). Kholodenko's suave dispatch of the outer movements' toccata-like sequences reveals as agile and well-drilled a left hand as you'd expect from a Van Cliburn Competition Gold Medallist but I miss the edgy brilliance and rhythmic energy one hears from Yefim Bronfman, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Olli Mustonen, Michel Béroff and (best of all) Rudolf Serkin.

Jed Distler

Rands

Cello Concerto^a. Chains Like the Sea. Danza petrificada

^aJohannes Moser *vc*

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / Clark Rundell

NMC (M) NMCD253 (61' • DDD)



Opening this orchestral portrait of the American-British composer Bernard

Rands is a Latino dance with a difference. There is no cheap melodic mimicry in this Brutalist homage to the Mexican poet Octavio Paz. There is no cut-and-paste appropriation of Latin American musical rhetoric and no enforced grooving like frustrated office workers at a Monday night salsa class. But the heat and the dance are still present and thrillingly so – on the music's inside, and on Rands's own terms.

Those terms, as this disc proves to anyone (like me) new to his music, are clear and integral. Rands studied with Dallapiccola and Berio and his music is lean, tense and melodically driven, even if those melodies are purposefully brittle and fragmented, and often rendered so by their context. I hear something of Magnus Lindberg in the way his larger canvases burst open towards grammatical colons like standing pillars (the woodwind-writing is often quite avian too).

The Cello Concerto (1996), written for Rostropovich, commissioned by the Boston Symphony and containing variations on the Welsh folk song 'Hiraeth', is nothing if not cosmopolitan. As befits the dedication, the solo part is charismatic but its relationship with the orchestra a little underexplored outside the central movement, in which Rostropovich's admiration for existing material (Rands's String Quartet No 2), and the positioning, allows the composer to breathe a little more freely. Johannes Moser is a committed and nuanced soloist.

We hear some of the same toned-down landscape-painting in the two movements of *Chains Like the Sea* after Dylan Thomas. 'Wales was a pretty dreary place on a Sunday', says Rands in explanation, but it's a more satisfying aesthetic for these reflective, somewhat self-conscious and momentarily frenetic pieces than for the concerto, which can feel lacking in event and residue. The opening *Danza petrificada* (2010) shows that Rands can thrill as much as he can craft and at the same time too, as well as indicating a possible new direction in a voice that

was discernibly forged late last century. The BBC Philharmonic sound like they have done far more than rehearse-record, unleashing all the wonder of Rands's orchestration. **Andrew Mellor**

Shostakovich

Symphonies – No 6, Op 54^a; No 7, 'Leningrad', Op 60^b. Festive Overture, Op 96^a. King Lear – Suite, Op 58^a

Boston Symphony Orchestra / Andris Nelsons

DG ④ 483 6728GH2 (132' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Boston,

^bFebruary, ^aApril-May, ^cMay 2017



We've come to expect a clear-sighted brilliance and technical excellence from this

series. It's become something of a benchmark in that respect. The Tenth Symphony arrived like a whirlwind to kick things off (8/15) and there have been many surprises and a few revelations along the way. But I do wonder, the more I hear of this cycle, if the pristine quality that Nelsons and his Boston orchestra bring to these pieces is inclined to render them a little too well-scrubbed. This is music of unvarnished power and directness – any hint of what one might call a surface sheen can so easily come between us and the music's plain speaking.

I don't want to make too much of this because there is always plenty to relish in Nelsons's approach; but it becomes very apparent in the second and third movements of the 'top heavy' Sixth Symphony that the cynicism and irony of what is after all one of the great deceptions in 20th-century music is compromised by the slickness, the 'cleanness', of Nelsons's performance. Put simply, it needs to be dirtier.

That long first movement completely wrong-footed the powers-that-be in Stalin's Soviet Union. It promised 'seriousness' (the rumour was that Shostakovich was working on his long-promised 'Lenin Symphony') and then wilfully (or so it was perceived) failed to deliver it, favouring practical jokes and rude punchlines over Soviet Realism. Nelsons sets up this shock tactic so well with a super-expansive *Largo*. He understands the stasis, the numbing stillness of its frozen wastes so well and makes real capital of what might be heard as a glimmer of hope when solo horn leads a telling modulation towards the close. Boston trumpets aside (I love that they preserve that 'blast from the past' in the

era of Munch and Leinsdorf), what follows must sound coarser and more blisteringly irreverent if the symphony as a whole is to deliver in full.

Smart programming juxtaposes Shostakovich's Fool, as it were, with his *King Lear*. Like his cinematic *Hamlet* this incidental music, operatic in tone – Cordelia is depicted in a decidedly *bel canto* clarinet tune – alternates between cues of rudimentary melodrama (the blinding of Gloucester) and a series of somewhat 'dutiful' entrance fanfares. Speaking of fanfares, Nelsons's own joke, if you like, is to conclude this first disc with the composer's ubiquitous *Festive Overture*. But if you are going to do it there's no point in sparing its vulgarity. For my money the tempo needs to be blistering and the tone raucous. It isn't. Methinks Nelsons tries too hard to make music of it.

And so to the main event – the *Leningrad*. Magnificently played and engineered though it is, the same misgivings apply. The first movement's toe-tapping Stalin tune undergoes exemplary transformations in that *Boléro*-like crescendo but it is progressed in such a 'calculated' way as to rob it of its threat. The monstrous modulation in the final throes of the crescendo (where all the extra brass weigh in) is neither as shocking nor as brutal as it needs to be. It's the difference between powerful and overwhelming.

The inner movements – among the most original the composer ever penned – are especially mindful of their Mahlerian allusions and display all the finesse of Nelsons's fine ear for detail. But I wonder if the starkness of the slow movement's chorale (like a Stravinskian take on the Baroque) is not sacrificed to the beauty and blend of the playing. The passage just before the return is undeniably exquisite. And affecting.

As is the long, slow haul to the finale's coda with its message of resistance and defiance. The eventual return of the symphony's opening theme in trombones turns on a thrilling tenuto in the trumpets and the final bars, of course, bring the house down. Much to applaud, then, but things that niggle, too, if you like your Shostakovich on the rare side.

Edward Seckerson

Shostakovich · Stravinsky

Shostakovich Symphony No 12, 'The Year 1917', Op 112^a **Stravinsky** Chant funèbre, Op 5^b.

The Firebird – Suite (1919 version)^b

ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra / Cornelius Meister

Capriccio ④ C5352 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Konzerthaus, Vienna,

^aOctober 17, 2017, ^bFebruary 15, 2018



There is only the most tenuous connection

between the two

main works on this disc: Russia pre- and post-Revolution. Both were recorded in concert by the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra under Cornelius Meister, but not at the same concert. Shostakovich's Twelfth Symphony, subtitled *The Year 1917*, was recorded in October 2017, marking the centenary of the October Revolution. It's frequently dismissed as one of the composer's weakest symphonies, a bombastic rabble-rouser to commemorate Lenin, planned for the 90th anniversary of his birth in 1960 but completed a year later.

Shostakovich was just a boy when the Revolution occurred but he witnessed violence on the streets of St Petersburg. The Twelfth has programmatic movement titles and deploys snatches of revolutionary songs, but is much less cinematic than the Eleventh (*The Year 1905*), with movement titles like 'Revolutionary Petrograd' and 'The Dawn of Humanity'. 'Razliv' refers to the village where Lenin went into hiding, while 'Aurora' was the name of the cruiser on the River Neva from which the first shot was fired to signal the Bolshevik assault on the Winter Palace.

It's not exactly subtle stuff and the only convincing way to treat it is to go at it hammer and tongs. The ORF VRSO has a wonderfully dark sound, particularly its lower strings, but is occasionally a bit too polite for this material. Vasily Petrenko has honed a great Russian pedigree at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, whose woodwinds scowl and leer far more viciously than their Viennese counterparts. Meister errs on the ponderous side, a good minute longer than Petrenko in the opening movement, two minutes longer in the second. The air of tension builds nicely in 'Aurora', though; and even if they don't sound as unbuttoned as the RLPO in the finale, they still generate the required decibels, contained well in Capriccio's weighty recording in Vienna's Konzerthaus.

By 1917, Stravinsky had long since left Russia for the West. Two early – pre-Revolution – works join Shostakovich's Twelfth. The recently rediscovered *Chant funèbre*, Stravinsky's memorial

Jeremy Denk

c.1300 - c.2000

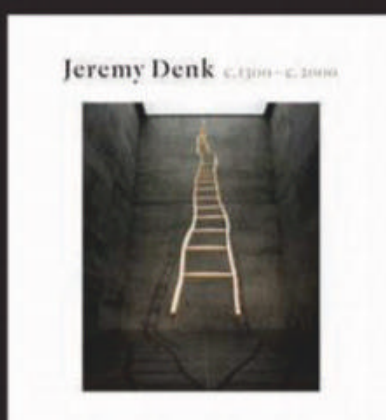


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to his teacher Rimsky-Korsakov, is given a much swifter account than Chailly's premiere recording on Decca, the strings especially fine. There is such vivid detail in the full ballet score to *The Firebird* – which takes its plumage straight from Rimsky's colouring – that any performance of the 1919 suite leaves me feeling short-changed. Meister offers a perfectly fine account but – of recent recordings – it's that man Petrenko again who teases out the mystery and the knotty intricacies of the score better in the full ballet (Onyx, 1/19). The VRSO pack a punch in the Infernal Dance and the General Rejoicing of the finale surges well, but it's not the most memorable account. **Mark Pullinger**

Shostakovich – selected comparison:

RLPO, *V Petrenko* (12/11) (NAXO) 8 572658

Stravinsky Chant funèbre – selected comparison:

Lucerne Fest Orch, *Chailly* (2/18) (DECC) 483 2562DH

Symphonic Poems – selected comparison:

BBC PO, *Nosedá* (11/07) (CHAN) CHAN10413

Tan Dun

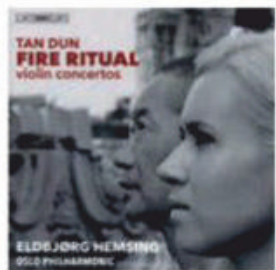
Violin Concertos – *Fire Ritual*;

Rhapsody and Fantasia

Eldbjørg Hemsing *vn*

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Tan Dun

BIS (F) BIS2406 (63' • DDD/DSD)



Whoever said that old forms were dead? The concerto has enjoyed a new lease of life during the past few decades, not least those written for solo violin and orchestra. Many recent examples have sought to redefine the boundaries of the form, even to the point of dispensing with the word 'concerto' altogether.

The two works featured here by the Chinese composer Tan Dun, *Rhapsody and Fantasia* and *Fire Ritual*, date from 2009 and 2018 respectively. *Rhapsody and Fantasia* is in two movements, each divided into three shorter sections, while *Fire Ritual*'s five sections also deviate from the standard three-movement design of a concerto. Subtitled 'A Music for the Victims of War', it evokes a strong ceremonial quality that lies at the heart of Tan Dun's music, clothed here in more militaristic guise. Solo violin and orchestra are often placed at opposites extremes of the spectrum, with the former functioning as the lone individual against the forces of brutality and aggression.

If *Fire Ritual* sees Tan Dun returning closer to his Chinese roots (something he

has done more and more during the past few years), *Rhapsody and Fantasia* is an intoxicating blend of East and West. Violin and orchestra are treated in a far more integrated fashion. A rhythmically propulsive first movement sets up call-and-response-like textures between the two, backed up by a funky groove on percussion. The middle section's nostalgic lyricism draws on Tan Dun's ability to craft songlike melodies that would not sound out of place in a Broadway musical. The second movement ('A Dream Out of Peking Opera') makes use of quasi-recitative form, with everything almost coming to a standstill – followed by a brilliantly executed cadenza-like passage by Eldbjørg Hemsing – before accelerating towards a thunderous ending.

While some of Tan Dun's ideas may seem rather overextended at times (one suspects that *Fire Ritual* would benefit from some judicious pruning in places), what comes across most powerfully here is the dynamic three-way synergetic split between Tan Dun as conductor, Eldbjørg Hemsing's striking characterisation of the solo violin's material, and the sheer force and power of the Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra. Recommended.

Pwyl ap Siôn

Tippett

Symphonies – No 3^a; No 4; in B flat

^a**Rachel Nicholls** *sop* **BBC Scottish Symphony**

Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Hyperion (F) ② CDA68231/2 (121' • DDD)



The Tippett who wrote the Third and Fourth Symphonies between 1970 and 1977 was, inevitably, a rather different composer from the Tippett who composed their numbered predecessors in the 1940s and '50s. Yet the essence of his musical spirit, rooted in a combination of left-wing politics and Jungian psychology, had not disappeared. Rather, it was seeking new relationships with the more laid-back, liberated mood of the 1960s. Conscious distancing from hallowed traditions (like Beethoven's Ninth, alluded to in the Third Symphony) was even more necessary. At the same time, Tippett surely believed that human behaviour – human culture – should never lose all connection with those fundamental values that, even in the 1960s, most devotees of the high arts aspired to preserve.

The operas and symphonic works enshrining Tippett's response to these new conditions were controversial when new and remain challenging – not least to performers – 40 years on. It's a tall order for a large orchestral ensemble to achieve, unanimously, that effortless blend of the streetwise and the sublime that the Third and Fourth Symphonies strive to project. No 3 is the longer and more complex of the two, a febrile negotiation between aggressiveness and calm that moves from a purely instrumental first part to a cantata-like second part. This centres on three Blues, Tippett-style, highlighting the genre's special capacity for turning from sadness to consolation. Soprano soloist Rachel Nicholls might be more Brünnhilde than Bessie Smith, but Tippett's Blues are in any case more operatic, in the spirit of *The Knot Garden* (written shortly before the symphony), than directly imitative of the American folk music that lies some distance behind them.

Symphony No 4 is less heterodox but equally demanding in its kaleidoscopic shifts of mood and texture – shifts that nevertheless seek to sustain a subtly evolving musical narrative. The orchestral playing in these performances cannot avoid occasional hints of doggedness, a sense of concentrating for dear life on intricately interweaving lines that can proliferate at breakneck speed or freeze into a state of deeply reflective stillness. Probably only regular performance over several years would create the kind of inspired spontaneity the composer seems to have imagined. Nevertheless, as with last year's Hyperion release of Symphonies No 1 and 2 (1/18), Martyn Brabbins and his attentive recording engineers ensure that clarity of detail always serves the broader symphonic processes that remain at the heart of Tippett's vision. In this context it is especially rewarding to have the first recording of the recently resurrected Symphony in B flat, begun in 1932 and worked on up to 1938, the year in which Tippett began his first wholly characteristic piece of orchestral writing, the Concerto for Double String Orchestra. Writing the B flat Symphony probably helped him to accept that, while Sibelian solemnities were not for him, a spirit of songful dance could be symphonically realised in other ways; and so it brought to an end his unusually protracted apprenticeship.

Arnold Whittall

'Baroque Journey'

JS Bach Concerto, BWV1059R. **Orchestral Suite No 2, BWV1067** – Badinerie. **St Matthew Passion, BWV244** – Erbarme dich **Castello** Sonata seconda **Couperin** Pièces de clavecin – Le rossignol-en-amour **Eyck** Der Fluyten Lust-hof – The English Nightingale; Lavolette **Handel** Solomon, HWV67 – The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba **Marais** Couplets de Folies **Naudot** Concerto, Op 17 No 1 **Purcell** Dido and Aeneas – Dido's Lament **Sammartini** Concerto in F **Tollett** Divisions on a Ground
Lucie Horsch rec **Academy of Ancient Music / Bojan Čičić** with **Charlotte Barbour-Condini** rec **Thomas Dunford** lute
Decca © 483 4722DH (67' • DDD)



What a welcome sight it has been for a second disc from Decca's young Dutch

recorder champion Lucie Horsch to cross my desk; because, while her 2016 debut Vivaldi disc might have felt a bit 'beginner's guide to the recorder', it nevertheless showcased some fine playing from an advocate clearly capable of bringing more glossy exposure to this hardly mass-consumption instrument than we're used to seeing.

Horsch is still only 19, so the first thing to praise here is that she and Decca waited a couple of years before recording this sequel, because that time and space for her to further develop and mature has reaped its rewards in these interpretations: her technique was always immaculate and her tone lively and clear, but there's been a clear growth in naturalness and confidence. Then, while 'Baroque Journey' continues the entry-level theme of the earlier disc – showcasing the recorder's versatility and vocal qualities by way of the musical landscape of Europe during the instrument's Baroque heyday – there's also repertoire for the 'experts', along with a stylistic variety that has allowed Horsch herself to shine in numerous directions.

It was a great move, for instance, to bookend the programme with Jacob van Eyck's solo recorder 'Lavolette' and 'The English Nightingale', because these mass-appeal miniatures are not only among the first real repertoire that every young recorder player gets to play but also pieces that allow the professional to show what they've got in terms of easy venacular, colouristic range and storytelling capabilities; and Horsch delivers on all three.

Collaborator highlights include Thomas Dunford poetically supporting and sparring

with Horsch's own swirling lines in Dario Castello's *Sonata seconda*, the joyfully delivered centrepiece of the Sammartini recorder concerto with the Academy of Ancient Music under Bojan Čičić, and Čičić sensitively duetting with Horsch in Bach's 'Erbarme dich' (Horsch on a well-chosen voice flute here).

That latter work is one of a number of Baroque crowd-pleasers punctuating the album, and I suspect *Gramophone* readers won't be convinced by all of these; Dido's Lament with the voice replaced by recorder, for instance. Plus, while Horsch and Charlotte Barbour-Condini's fluid virtuosity in Handel's Arrival of the Queen of Sheba are delivered with fizzing exuberance, the engineering puts them rather too forward in the balance for my taste.

Still, I'm willing to press skip a couple of times when the rest is so thoroughly enjoyable. **Charlotte Gardner**

'French Cello Concertos'

Lalo Cello Concerto **Massenet** Thaïs – Méditation **Milhaud** Cello Concerto No 1, Op 136 **Offenbach** Les larmes de Jacqueline, Op 76 No 2 **Saint-Saëns** Cello Concerto No 1, Op 33
Hee-Young Lim vc
London Symphony Orchestra / Scott Yoo
Sony Classical © 80358 11842-5 (76' • DDD)

'Russian Cello Concertos'

Glazunov Concerto ballata, Op 108. Chant du ménestrel, Op 71. Deux Morceaux, Op 20 **Rimsky-Korsakov** Serenade, Op 37 **Tchaikovsky** Variations on a Rococo Theme, Op 33 (arr Fitzenhagen). Pezzo capriccioso, Op 62. String Quartet No 1, Op 11 – Andante cantabile
Li-Wei Qin vc **Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra, Pardubice / Michael Halász**
Naxos © 8 573860 (70' • DDD)



As debut solo albums go, the Korean cellist Hee-Young Lim's Abbey Road-recorded programme of French cello concertos – with the LSO under Scott Yoo – is certainly at the upper end of the assuredness spectrum. The programme draws on – and the booklet notes expound upon – Lim's affinity for French music and culture, grown over years living in Paris. It's a meaty programme too, which sees her partner the regularly recorded pair of the Saint-Saëns and Lalo concertos with the lesser-spotted Milhaud concerto, topped off with two crowd-pleasing 'bises'

in the form of Offenbach's *Les larmes de Jacqueline* and Massenet's Méditation from *Thaïs*.

Lim brings an exceptionally refined, silkily lyrical sound to the whole. In fact her very first Saint-Saëns entry verily glides in while also still indisputably meeting the score's *marcato* markings. Or, for a lovely instance of stylistic finesse dovetailing with a broad tonal spectrum, try her luxuriously taken chromatic climb in the same concerto's final movement, from richly throbbing bottom C depths up to silvery C⁷ heights (5'06" to 5'31"). She can do edge, too, as heard in the punch of her Milhaud's strident opening solo before Scott Yoo and the orchestra suavely sashay in underneath. Then, while the Massenet may only be the encore, it's a very satisfying one: a gentle and sophisticated reading which by turns takes its time and pushes things on in all the right places, supported by a softly glowing orchestra.

Naxos's booklet notes for Li-Wei Qin's programme of Russian cello concertos with Michael Halász and the Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra, Pardubice, contain fewer clues as to his own inspiration for going Russian, besides perhaps his Silver at the 1998 Tchaikovsky International Competition; and while he conveys a similar lyricism, his playing often has a little less finesse. He's not helped here by the orchestra itself: take Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*, where the opening orchestral sighing phrases come with sharp revs in dynamic, weighty pauses and vaguely shrieky woodwind. The glowing tone Qin brings to his own first entry goes some way to making amends for this (and indeed the orchestra has its good moments thereafter), but even from him it's a bit of a mixed bag as the work progresses. For instance, Variation 4's neat fluttering scales are slightly undone by a bull-in-a-china-shop approach to Var 5's virtuoso leaps, which adversely affects tonal production.

Likewise, Tchaikovsky's *Andante cantabile* is played with love and with an attractively rich and warm sound, but to my ears Qin has uncomfortably over-delivered on the hairpin covering that string of repeated solo Fs (1'59"). What I did enjoy more was Glazunov's *Concerto ballata*, where everyone delivers a fully invested and no-quibbles attractive Russian sound.

Charlotte Gardner

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Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C minor, Op 111

Yevgeny Sudbin talks to Tim Parry about his approach to playing Beethoven's last piano sonata

Beethoven's final piano sonata is an enduring pillar of the piano literature, an archetype of musical transcendentalism. For many pianists it has a rather intimidating reputation, not so much because of its technical difficulty but rather because of its profound spirituality and its exalted status in the Western classical canon. It is often referred to by its opus number alone, without ambiguity or confusion, or any need for further explanation. Indeed, in the 1990s it even had a record label named after it.

Opus 111 has only two movements: a relatively conventional *Sturm und Drang* opening movement that conveys everything one expects of Beethoven in C minor, and an extended set of variations in C major, where seemingly straightforward material is elaborated and intensified in ways that can be analysed but whose effect goes way beyond that analysis. Many musicians and commentators have perceived a philosophical or religious dimension to this music, and certainly its increasingly ethereal, contemplative and visionary nature is among its many unique characteristics. For Edwin Fischer the two movements symbolised 'here and beyond'. And the pianist and writer William Kinderman has described this work as reaching 'beyond the merely aesthetic dimension to touch the domain of the moral and ethical'. For any musician, this is a very special work of art.

When I arrive at Yevgeny Sudbin's north London home he is busy working on a piano transcription of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*. We talk about the challenges involved and the nature of piano transcriptions, before eventually opening the score of Beethoven's Op 111. In a sense this feels like an ideal work to talk to any pianist about, especially one so thoughtful and articulate. There is surely so much to say. Yet, just as the music itself is elusive, and one's understanding of it evolves over time, trying to pin down aspects of this work in any meaningful sense isn't so easy.

I start by asking Sudbin why, for his first recording of solo Beethoven, he has chosen a selection of late works. 'Ah, yes,' he muses. 'Why start at the end? It's a good question. I actually feel most at home with late Beethoven, I think partly because this music is not as obvious as many of his earlier works, which often portray very specific characters. In late Beethoven the music isn't straightforward in terms of its mood, and as an interpreter this gives you some imaginative freedom. And the more you live with this music the more you discover in it.'

So how long has Sudbin lived with Op 111 – when did he first learn it? 'I had moved to London, so I was maybe 16 or 17. I had already played a number of earlier Beethoven sonatas.' Sudbin pauses, as if wondering whether he should share the next bit. 'I actually learnt this piece at a good time. When I was studying in Russia, I found that how talented you were perceived to be was often dependent on how good you were at imitation. Teachers would impose strong personalities on you, and to some extent if you were able to imitate them you were seen as being talented. As a result, it could be



Intuitive feel for late Beethoven: Yevgeny Sudbin plays the last two piano sonatas

difficult to develop your own identity – and that bridge is not crossed successfully by everybody. I really started thinking for myself when I was about 14 or 15, and when I first studied Op 111, my teacher at that time, Christopher Elton [at the Royal Academy of Music], was really keen to know my ideas about the work rather than simply instilling his own. This is important and helps to develop your musical personality and your ability to shape your own interpretation.'

We talk in general terms about how that interpretation is shaped, and it is clear that Sudbin has a strongly intuitive feel for this music. 'When I was young', he says, 'I sometimes played Beethoven from bad editions, and I would end up changing things slightly, and then later when I studied the Urtext edition I would realise that actually I'd done it the right way all along. So many of Beethoven's markings just make sense with my understanding of the music. Every note and every marking has a specific purpose of course, but I haven't especially felt the need to question these.'


I suggest that the closer you look, the more particular Beethoven seems to be. But Sudbin guards against getting bogged down in detail: 'There is a danger of getting lost when one attempts to analyse late Beethoven. While harmonic analysis is certainly important – and I learnt a great deal about it from Murray Perahia's lessons – it is one of many tools to use to try and come closer to the "truth", whatever that might be.' Like a composer who learns the rules of counterpoint, maybe it's useful for a performer to do this sort of analysis and then forget about it? 'Absolutely,' Sudbin agrees.

There are two specific questions I want to ask about the second movement – regarding tempo and trills. The variations in this movement give the illusion of being played progressively faster, as Beethoven fits in more and more notes, but he insists that the actual tempo remains the same (with

frequent *L'istesso tempo* reminders). I wonder how Sudbin settles on an opening tempo. Is this dependent on what comes later as the music becomes more elaborate? How concerned is he to match the tempo of each variation? 'Tempo is a tricky question,' Sudbin begins. 'Sometimes, when discussing practice methods with my students, I tell them that one of the most unrhythmical things is a metronome. This is music that happens between the notes. For me the tempo at the beginning is determined by these gaps, and how you can keep the tension between the notes. Someone like Sokolov has an amazing ability to stretch a tempo without you really noticing, or to give great flexibility without you really feeling it because somehow it's completely convincing. As the music progresses, I'm not religious about being strict. This is not what guides my thinking. Tempo is something that just happens. Sometimes it's good to check with a metronome, but more generally you get the overall feeling as the variations progress that what you're playing is convincing. The piano and acoustic will influence your choice of tempo, because these things have an effect on how you can sustain the tension within the music. Ultimately though, while we can discuss this in hindsight, a lot of these decisions happen spontaneously.'

'In late Beethoven the music isn't obvious in terms of its mood, and this gives you some imaginative freedom'

The second movement culminates in a series of sustained high trills that have the effect of suspending time. The transcendent quality of this music is quite unlike anything else in the piano repertoire (one has to leap forward to, say, Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* to find a similar kind of visionary ecstasy). At the risk of reducing such profound music to a merely technical question, I ask whether it is difficult to achieve the desired effect given such physically demanding requirements. Sudbin's response is characteristically straightforward: 'I never approach challenging pieces from a technical perspective but from a musical one. These trills are difficult, especially when you have to change fingering – keeping them completely even is a real problem. But you always start out with a musical thought, and then later you try and work out how, technically, to achieve the result you want. It's the same with writing a piano transcription.' Here, Sudbin refers back to our earlier conversation about his Tchaikovsky arrangement. 'You might have certain elements in an orchestral work where it is almost impossible to find an equivalent on the piano, and you have to find a solution, which may include changing a lot of the notes. In playing a difficult piece on the piano, the solution won't be to change the notes, but it might be to change the fingering, or adjust the weight of your hand, or do something different with your wrist, and so on. The point is that the musical idea comes first, and the solution follows.'

I'm reminded of Artur Schnabel's quote about being attracted only to music that is better than it can be performed. Sudbin understands the impulse. 'With such great music, you never run out of questions. That's one reason I love late Beethoven so much. Sometimes the questions are more interesting than the answers, in that there are no definitive responses. This is music that always feels just out of reach.' 

► To read Gramophone's review of Yevgeny Sudbin's Beethoven, turn to page 87



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Chamber



Richard Whitehouse listens to percussion music by Xenakis:

'Pléiades is akin to Reich's Drumming, albeit with visceral contrasts rather than coolly incremental changes' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 81**



Richard Bratby enjoys a Parisian album from Philippe Graffin:

'Graffin's gleaming, elegant virtuosity never degenerates either into lassitude or fireworks for fireworks' sake' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**

Bartók

Complete String Quartets

Diotima Quartet

Naïve ® ③ V5452 (164' • DDD)



How do you like your Bartók quartets served?

With precision,

passion, a sense of mystery or a sense of humour? With spontaneity or with a pinch of paprika? All options are catered for on disc, some, like the Takács Quartet (on Hungaroton, 12/84, or, preferably, on Decca, 4/98), the Belcea Quartet (Warner Classics, 5/08), the Mikrokosmos Quartet (Hungaroton) and now Quatuor Diotima offering a balanced blend of all the principal ingredients. Among the tried-and-tested my personal favourites are the Végh Quartet (their second recording, also on Naïve, 8/01), who combine intelligence with local flavouring, though not always as forceful or as tight ensemble-wise as my other favourite vintage set, the 'middle' Juilliard Quartet recording (Retrospective, 4/02). The Véghs suggest a blend of earth and air, rather more so than their feted Hungarian predecessors on disc, the Hungarian Quartet (DG), respected though they are. None of these will seriously disappoint.

Prior to the Diotima the last set to come my way was by the Arcadia Quartet (Chandos, 11/18), an extremely fine run of performances sympathetically reviewed in these pages by Richard Bratby. But put on the opening of the Third Quartet and the Arcadia's relatively plain exegesis is in my view quite upstaged by this Quatuor Diotima version, where you sense four visitors newly landed on a strange planet, each glancing at the other in wonderment at what they are seeing. In addition to the prescribed glissandos, the Diotimas employ portamento which, given that the music dates from a period when portamento was widely employed, is appropriate. In the coda of the same

works the Diotima call on a wider range of dynamics than the Arcadia and the dive-bombing cello line makes more of an impact, while in the second movement of the Second Quartet the Diotima capture the kitsch mood of the mock 'popular ballad' halfway through. They're similarly tongue-in-cheek in the 'banjo-and-fiddle' episode 3'53" into the Sixth Quartet's second movement, a passage marked *Rubato – Animato, molto agitato*. Then again, their lightning inflections in the swift, muted coda of the Second Quartet's second movement suggest nocturnal panic in the insect world, an image that Bartók himself – a great lover of insect life – may well have had in mind when he wrote the piece.

But not everything goes the Diotima's way. In the Fifth Quartet's finale the sudden switch from rugged aggression to a witty minuet send-up near the close of the movement (marked *Allegretto, con indifferenza*, 5'55") needs just a tad more breathing space. Here the Arcadia Quartet employ finer judgement, as they do at the *lento pianissimo* close of the Sixth Quartet's first movement, where Quatuor Diotima seem merely to shrug off one of Bartók's most touching episodes. The Arcadia keep a tighter rhythmic hold on the Fourth Quartet's wildly warring finale (a strong sense of rhythm is a virtue throughout their set), though Quatuor Diotima certainly capture the spirit.

So swings and roundabouts, I'd say, but at the final reckoning this new set shows the fuller appreciation of Bartók's sound palette, its heady combination of profundity, invention, wit, vivid tone-colouring and searing emotion (specifically in the later works). Were you to chance upon these recordings of the quartets before any others, you'd have the whole picture to hand, more or less. **Rob Cowan**

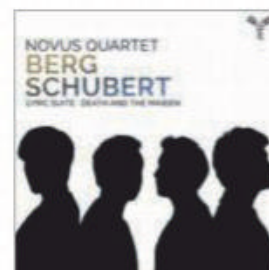
Berg • Schubert

Berg Lyric Suite Schubert String Quartet

No 14, 'Death and the Maiden', D810

Novus Quartet

Aparté ® AP188 (75' • DDD)



Any misapprehensions of Biedermeier gentility are banished by bracingly antiseptic

octaves and fifths to open this *Death and the Maiden*, as forbidding as the Doctor's waiting room in *Wozzeck*. For all the Novus Quartet's subtle command of portamento, this young Korean ensemble turn Schubert to face us head-on, stern and unyielding of visage, mortality snapping at his heels. Pure tone lends an unearthly pallor to the slow movement, and subsequent touches of vibrato serve not to impart any rosy glow but rather to deepen the established pathos.

It's a convincing and imposing vision of the quartet on its own terms, albeit compromised a little by the leader's sniffing, but the Chiaroscuro Quartet recently presented a more rounded, dare I say human portrait of late Schubert, guided no less by historically informed principles. Lower pitch and gut strings both helped: by the time of the finale's infernal rondo the law of diminishing returns has taken its toll on the short-breathed phrasing and relentless intensity of the Novus.

Perhaps intentionally, their Schubert comes as all the more of a shock after a *Lyric Suite* which makes for easy listening by comparison. The implications of the title are fully realised and without the deadening hand of irony in a genuinely 'jovial' first movement and the slow waltz rhythms of the *Andante amoroso*. Without going to the extremes of their Belcea Quartet mentors, the Novus capture every whispered confidence of the Scherzo under their breath, aided by an exceptionally close and detailed stereo spread. The image of Berg is caught halfway between Schubert and Ligeti, just where he belongs.

Peter Quantrill



The chamber music of Steve Elcock is magnificently brought to life by, among others, clarinettist Peter Cigleris and The Veles Ensemble

Elcock

'Chamber Music, Vol 1'

Clarinet Sextet, Op 11^a. An Outstretched Hand, Op 24^b. The Shed Dances, Op 26^b. String Trio No 1, Op 8^d

^bDaniel Shao *fl*^{abc} ^aPeter Cigleris *cl*

^aYuri Kalnits *vn* ^aLeon Bosch *db*

^bCatalina Ardelean *pf* The Veles Ensemble
Toccata Classics © TOCC0506 (80' • DDD)



Steve Elcock's engaging Clarinet Sextet (2014, rev 2017) started

life as a concertino in 2001 and traverses a landscape full of light and shade, culminating in a vibrant final 'Variations and Theme', with its invocations of other composers and concluding *Mason's Apron*, a traditional folk dance. *The Shed Dances* (2016) is a clarinet quartet composed in honour of the work of Heinrich Frenkel (1860-1931) in 'developing exercise rehabilitation' for patients suffering from ataxia. A set of big-hearted miniatures, the movement titles give clues to their expressive intent (and the composer's ready wit): 'Disgruntled waltz', 'Petrified minuet', and so on.

Elcock's serious side (very audible in his powerful Third Symphony, 10/17) comes to the fore in the knotty First String Trio (2016, reworking a 1998 piece for two violins and viola), and *An Outstretched Hand* for flute, clarinet, piano and string trio (2015), a moving fantasia inspired by the appalling refugee crisis in North Africa and the Middle East. The 'outstretched hand' is a fusion – of a hand held out in greeting, pleading for help, rendering assistance – the music cunningly embodying that notion in the development of its musical material.

The performances are marvellous. The Veles Ensemble – a string trio – play throughout, with clarinettist Peter Cigleris the pick of their colleagues helping bring this terrific music to life. **Guy Rickards**

Erlebach

Complete Trio Sonatas

L'Achéron

Ricercar © RIC393 (69' • DDD)



What a warmly serene introduction to the music of Philipp Heinrich

Erlebach (1657-1714) we've been given here by François Joubert-Caillet and his ensemble L'Achéron. While this is down in part to the repertoire itself – repertoire in which 'tenderness is blended with luminous majesty', as Joubert-Caillet aptly puts it in his booklet notes – there's no question that a good 70 per cent of the effect is down to what L'Achéron themselves have done with it.

Erlebach was Kapellmeister at the court of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt from 1681. Not much of his music survives, thanks to a fire at the castle in 1735 which claimed all his manuscripts. However, an exception is this volume of trio sonatas he published in 1694 for violin, viola da gamba and continuo, which melds the Italian taste for virtuoso violin-writing with the French love of the viol and the dance suite, all wrapped up in Germanic architecture that prefaces each dance sequence with a sonata. Erlebach also tweaks the upper-line forces for effect, with two of the sonatas requiring the violinist to use scordatura (alternative tuning of its strings), and one requiring a violino piccolo.

The opening of the album is particularly serene, thanks to L'Achéron's decision to start not with No 1 but with No 4. While

New release March 2019



ICAC 5156

ICA Classics is proud to release Moné Hattori's debut recording featuring Franz Waxman's virtuoso showpiece *Carmen-Fantasie*, technically brilliant as well as being a rarity on record. Shostakovich's magnificent Violin Concerto No.1 completes the CD, which was released in Japan in 2016 and received very enthusiastic reviews:

"Her outstanding talent really comes across clearly...listening to her play Shostakovich's great cadenza, I'm sure I am not the only one who felt a shiver run down their spine" (*Stereo Review*).

Hailed by the music press and winner of the 2015 International Boris Goldstein Violin Competition, Moné Hattori has been described as 'the crowning masterpiece of Zakhar Bron's talent academy – certain to be at the forefront of the world's best violinists' (*Jungfrau Zeitung*, Switzerland).

Franz Waxman
Carmen-Fantasie for Violin and Orchestra
Dmitri Shostakovich
Violin Concerto No.1 in A minor, Op.77

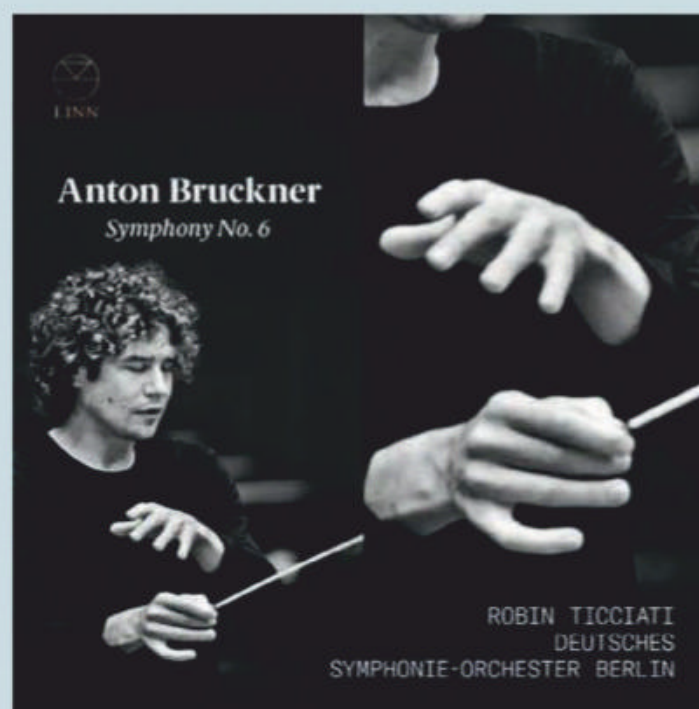
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CKD 510

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No 1 in D is certainly very lovely, No 4's more luxurious and expansive C major beauty makes a more compelling entry into Erlebach's 'tender and luminous' world. The ordering continues equally intelligently – Nos 6, 5, 1, 2 and 3 – so the programme climaxes with the one sonata where Erlebach replaces the standard short, final gigue with a larger-scale and more noble Chaconne.

L'Achéron's playing style cements the impression: majestic and amorous of tone, with a soft-edged, ample yet transparent-textured sound that's humanised further through little tugs and pushes of metre and hairpin dynamic bulges. As such, it offers a very distinct alternative to the lighter and more twangy sound to be heard from El Arte Musico's attractive recording (Verso) or the less sustained notes to be heard on Rodolfo Richter's courtly readings for Linn.

In other words, these readings constitute an austerity-free zone; and, coupled with the thoughtful ordering, I'm very taken by them indeed. **Charlotte Gardner**

Handel · Purcell

'The Recorder Sonatas'

Anonymous *Fantaisie No 1 Handel Sonatas*, Op 1 – No 2, HWV360; No 4, HWV362; No 7, HWV365; No 9a, HWV367a; No 11, HWV369.

Preludes – HWV571; HWV572; HWV576

Purcell *Prelude*, ZN773

Stefan Temmingh *rec* **Wiebke Weidanz** *hpd*

Accent © ACC24353 (63' • DDD)



It's a happy sight to see Stefan Temmingh follow up last year's

excellent album of Vivaldi and Bach recorder concertos with the Capricornus Consort Basel (2/18) by turning his attention to one of the chamber jewels of the recorder literature.

Handel's six recorder sonatas present a very different challenge to the virtuosity of Bach and Vivaldi. Here, the performers have to project simple lyric beauty: long, aria-like lines which effectively cast the recorder player as a singer. In fact it's the harpsichordist who gets most of the florid acrobatics, the textures often thick enough to suggest an orchestral sound (indeed, one of the set's delights is its borrowings from Handel's opera arias and the concerti grossi), most likely because these sonatas weren't written primarily for recorder display at all but instead for the harpsichord lessons of Princess Anne.

With that in mind, Temmingh and Weidanz have decided to stick to recorder and harpsichord alone: a choice that's divided the major players over the years, with fellow members of the no-cello camp including Pamela Thorby, Michala Petri (whose clean, bright sound I particularly enjoy in this repertoire) and Eric Bosgraaf, and the cello fans including Dan Laurin and Marion Verbruggen. Note also that this means no switches to organ accompaniment to shake the timbres up a bit.

What has truly shaken things up is the decision to precede each of the sonatas with a small prelude. The ones for harpsichord are by Handel himself but the recorder ones throw up a couple of fabulously idiomatic pinchings: an anonymous *fantaisie* from the Charles Babel collection leads into the B flat major Sonata, and Purcell's Prelude in B minor, ZN773, joins the D minor Sonata; then we hear a 24-second improvisation before the F major Sonata. I love the results, in terms of both the contents and how seamlessly and naturally each prelude rolls into its sonata first movement. Indeed, the naturalness of the playing across the set, aided by both artists' decision not to write out their ornamentations in advance, is one its chief glories.

With such a palpable rapport between the two musicians, this is a disc thoroughly worthy of your time. **Charlotte Gardner**

Haydn

String Quartets – Op 20 No 2;

Op 54 No 2; Op 64 No 4

Jubilee Quartet

Rubicon © RCD1039 (66' • DDD)



I can't recall a Haydn quartet disc provoking such mixed feelings as

this debut album from the young Jubilee Quartet. In an engaging booklet note, violinist Julia Louck vividly conveys the players' excitement as they immersed themselves in these three contrasting quartets, programmed here in reverse chronological order. The playing – questing, lean-toned (vibrato sparingly applied), thoughtfully phrased and coloured – bears her out. I enjoyed some movements without reservation: say, the expansive opening *Moderato* of Op 20 No 2, which combines a bold dramatic sweep with acute moment-by-moment characterisation, not least their sudden veiled *pianissimo* when the harmony dips

flatwards near the end of the exposition. Here and elsewhere the players' attentiveness to balance and inner part-writing brings out rhythmic and motivic detail that often goes for little. The same quartet's final fugue, held down to a hushed, conspiratorial *sotto voce*, has an ideal mix of transparency, precision and buoyancy. Crucially, too, it made me smile.

That fugue is a rare movement that gives no scope for the extreme rhythmic flexibility that is a hallmark of the Jubilee's playing. In the Minuet of Op 64 No 4 – a countrified Ländler in all but name – the teasing little hesitations enhance the music's playful charm. But in the first movement their caressing and distending of the dusky pastoral tune at the end of the exposition sounds precious, all the more so on its several reappearances (the Jubilee are generous with repeats). There's a lot to be said for playing a theme relatively straight first time round.

The guileless *Adagio* of Op 64 No 4 constantly threatens to lean backwards, with the players seemingly proceeding bar-by-bar. I hear nothing of Haydn's prescribed *cantabile e sostenuto*. The worst casualty of all is the brilliant opening *Vivace* of Op 54 No 2, where, in their desire to create a sense of improvisatory freedom, the players neglect to establish a stable underlying pulse. For all its inspired eccentricity, this music should surely have more than a touch of concerto-like grandeur and flamboyance. Not here. All the more frustrating, then, that elsewhere in this quartet the Jubilee are at their imaginative best: from the second movement's wailing gypsy lament, via the shocking, grinding dissonances of the Minuet's Trio, to the finale's fragile, healing song, tenderly floated by leader Tereza Privatska.

Richard Wigmore

Haydn · Mozart · Schubert

Haydn *String Quartet*, Op 20 No 2

Mozart *String Quartet* No 14, K387

Schubert *Quartettsatz*, D703

Akilone Quartet

Mirare © MIR388 (68' • DDD)



In the engagingly written booklet notes accompanying this debut release

from the young French Quatuor Akilone they talk in some detail about rhetoric: that while Haydn, Mozart and Schubert have

used rhetoric very much as a tool at the service of sound rather than as their primary goal, it's still audible in these three quartets. So with Haydn's Quartet in C, Op 20 No 2, that means rhetoric in its pure state, in the form of lively and interesting conversation; while in the following Mozart Quartet in G, K387, it turns up as staged operatic conversation; then with Schubert's *Quartettsatz* the rhetoric is dreamlike and magical in delivery, submersed in tales, poetry and art.

I'm taking the trouble to relay the quartet's written thoughts because I've been so struck by how very audible this gradual transformation is across their three interpretations, to the extent that, having already listened extensively before reading the booklet, I didn't need to be told that this was a rhetorical journey in time. Likewise the idea of polarity that they've adopted following discussions with their mentor, Alban Berg Quartet founder Hatto Beyerle; listen in the Schubert to the dynamic extremes happening on the flip of a coin, or the juxtaposition of music and silence in the Haydn second movement.

In fact, particularly with the Haydn, some readers who prefer a little bloom may find their playing a touch dry. However, it is immensely classy: elegant, precise and dainty, sounding very much like a lively and intelligent conversation. I've also been enjoying the sharp, slightly unblended edge to all this precision in some of the punchier moments of octave homophony; and note that this impression of different personalities coming together is very deliberate, as is clear when you compare it to the blending of, say, the two violins moving together alone in sixths in bar 19 of the slow movement, or their poetic duetting in the later *cantabile* section, where Elise De-Bendelac's second violin sensitively holds back from Emeline Concé's first. (An interesting comparative reference point, if you are trying to work out what you think of all the above, is the Chiaroscuro Quartet's reading – BIS, A/16).

There is a very slight filling-out of the textures for the Mozart, and again for the Schubert; the latter is an interpretation that keeps fragility and vulnerability to the fore, even where the tension might perhaps be allowed to slacken a bit.

A superbly played, intelligent and thought-provoking debut. *Félicitations à tous*. **Charlotte Gardner**

Martinaitytė

In Search of Lost Beauty ...

FortVio

Starkland © ST231 (70' • DDD)



Lithuanian-born and New York-based, Žibuoklė Martinaitytė (b1973) has built a substantial and varied catalogue (further details at zibuokle.com), little known as yet in the UK but which, on the evidence of this new release, should be well worth investigating further.

In Search of Lost Beauty ... has its basis in experiences at and around Notre-Dame Cathedral, the accrued memories and sensations resulting in the 10 continuous sections of her 70-minute work. Scored for piano trio with a backdrop of live electronics (similar in its presence to that of the 'soundtrack' often favoured by Michel van der Aa), the result is clearly intended as an immersive experience in its intricate layering of detail made subordinate to density of texture as this constantly changes across the whole. The original presentation featured synchronised video projections; but, while these were no doubt pertinent, their absence arguably enhances the music's potency by drawing the listener into its ambit. Two of the sections were written and first heard separately but listening to them in this way makes clear just how Martinaitytė's imagination is most acute when focused on an extended timespan and broader aural canvas.

It helps that the playing of FortVio is so attuned to this music's many timbral shades, and to its long-term tension and release, in sound that lacks nothing in natural ambience without undue resonance. Ingram Marshall's enthusiastic commendation is no mere hyperbole, as those who take the time to experience this singular music will surely concur. A cordial recommendation for what is one of the most significant releases thus far from the enterprising Starkland label.

Richard Whitehouse

Mozart

Complete String Quintets

Harald Schoneweg *va* **Klenke Quartet**

Accentus © ③ ACC80467 (165' • DDD)



The Klenke Quartet play modern instruments but are assiduous in their application of historically informed performance practice. Vibrato is employed

so sparingly that if I happened upon these performances on the radio, I might at first think they were played on period instruments. With intonation that's consistently spot-on, the ensemble's gleaming, fine-spun tone not only beguiles but allows for a textural clarity that can enhance the brilliance and exhilaration of certain passages. Listen in K593 to the dazzling virtuoso interplay in the development section of the opening *Allegro* (starting at 5'12"), and how the precipitously cascading figures are buoyed by the punchy syncopated accompaniment. Occasionally, first violinist Annegret Klenke's sound projects so fiercely that it throws off the internal balance in her crucial dialogues with the first viola (which I assume is played by the quartet's Yvonne Uhlemann rather than guest Harald Schoneweg, although the booklet doesn't specify).

Tempos are consistently brisk, often giving a sense of lively banter in the outer movements – try the finale of K515 for an especially delightful example. Indeed, the Klenke seem to have taken to heart Mozart's famous dictum that his music should 'flow like oil'. Even the slow movements have a feeling of urgency. In the magical *Adagio* of K174, for instance, there's a slightly breathless quality that induces an unexpected feeling of disquiet. By contrast, the Chilingirians with Yuko Inoue (CRD, 11/07) are only a hair slower yet convey a rapt, moonlit atmosphere.

If only the Klenke were as meticulous in their attention to Mozart's dynamic indications as they are in adhering to historical performance techniques. One might not think of Mozart as taking especial care over such details in his scores, yet the very first page of K174 abounds with carefully placed *forte piano* markings in the second violin and second viola's chugging accompaniment – and not the common *fp* that's an immediate loud to soft but one where volume alternates by crotchet. The Nash Ensemble observe these conscientiously, producing a joyous, pulsating energy, while the Klenke don't make much of them at all. Nor do they make much of the dramatic *forte* outbursts in the opening *Allegro* of K593, while in the *Adagio* they underplay the sudden *piano* after the opening two-bar crescendo, robbing this surprise *sotto voce* gesture of its operatic effect.

I'm puzzled, too, by the Klenke's oddly nonchalant phrasing at the beginning of the first movement of K515, music Charles Rosen views as 'of a chromatic

bitterness and insistence that can still shock by the naked force of its anguish'. The Menuetto, on the other hand, is masterfully done: lean and aching, with a Trio that allows in a few precious rays of sunshine. I hear far more pain in the *Adagio* than the Klenke seem to, particularly in the second theme with its stabbing *sforzandos* and throbbing semiquavers. And then there's the extraordinary slow introduction to the finale. 'Nothing closer to an ultimate despair has ever been imagined', Rosen writes of it, although here it sails blithely along. The Nash, at more or less the same tempo, delve far deeper into this passage's tormented heart.

Indeed, although I retain a profound emotional allegiance to the Budapest Quartet's mono LPs I fell in love with more than 40 years ago – and whose latest CD reissue by Sony was lauded by Rob Cowan – the Nash's dramatically alert and stylishly expressive accounts have also won a place in my heart. Both sets move and charm me in a way that the Klenke, for all their lucidity and finesse, never quite manage.

Andrew Farach-Colton

String Quintets – selected comparisons:

Budapest Qt, Trampler (12/14) (SONY) 88843 06531-2

Nash Ens (HYPE) CDA67861/3

Roman

The Golovin Music

Höör Barock / Dan Laurin *recs*

BIS ④ BIS2355 (82' • DDD/DSD)



If you are familiar with any of the music of Johan Helmich Roman, it is probably his *Drottningholmsmusiken* that you have heard. That set of orchestral pieces, written to fall undemandingly on the ears of the guests at a Swedish royal wedding in 1744, has been recorded a number of times, most recently by Ensemble 1700 Lund under Göran Karlsson (CPO, 12/10), and parts of it are apparently still in use at Swedish weddings today. Less well known is his music for a banquet thrown in Stockholm 16 years earlier by the Russian envoy Count Golovin in honour of the coronation of Tsar Peter II, and for which he managed to secure the services of the Swedish court orchestra under Roman (its director), who also brought with him no fewer than 45 specially composed pieces of background music. Although a recording of some of them appeared in 1986, this is the first of the complete score.

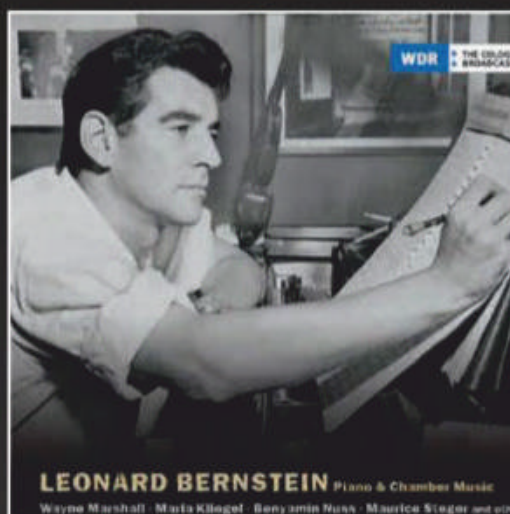
Not that the score is complete in every sense; it is a score, but it has no indications of instrumentation or tempo. Dan Laurin finds his own intuitive solutions, varying the colours as much as possible within the combinations provided by Höör Barock's 12-strong line-up of recorders, oboes, bassoon, strings, harpsichord, guitar and mandora – even the harpsichord and mandora get solo movements.

There's no point in making great claims for the pieces themselves, most of which are under three minutes. They are certainly lively and well made, and there is a *galant* modernity to some of them that can permit us to think of Roman as more than just 'the Swedish Handel', but they are intentionally not the sort to take you on a journey. Laurin has convincingly grouped them into little suitelets but in truth they could be played in any number or order, start anywhere and finish anywhere, and it would make no great difference. If you want some baroque entertainment while throwing a dinner party, or perhaps driving in your car, they could be just the thing, especially as the performances are so well executed, stylish and sunny.

Lindsay Kemp



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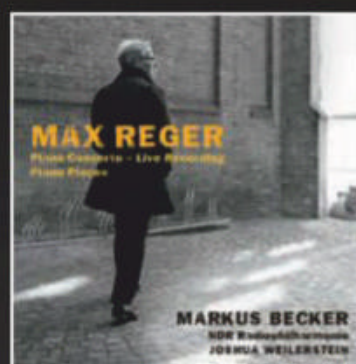
Leonard Bernstein

Piano & Chamber Music

Wayne Marshall, Maria Kliegel, Benyamin Nuss, Maurice Steger and others.

This is a delightful 3-CD set of piano and chamber works by Leonard Bernstein – much of it not well-known and seldom performed – reflecting the intimate side of his music.

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Alessia Toffanin, piano

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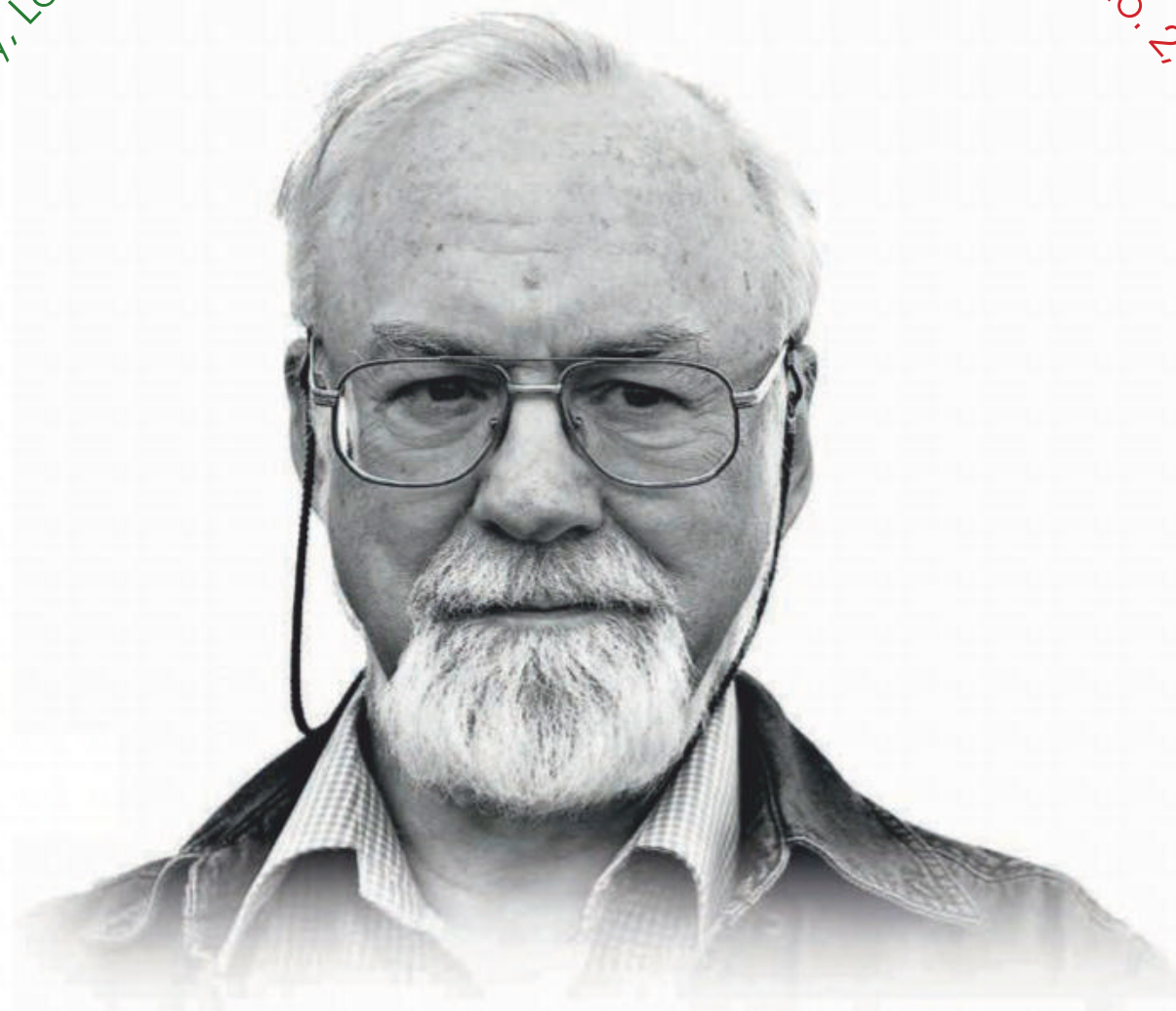
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Music
String Quartets Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7



Grand conception: the percussion ensemble DeciBells excel in Xenakis's wide-ranging *Pléiades*

Shostakovich

String Quartets - No 1, Op 49;

No 2, Op 68; No 7, Op 108

Carducci Quartet

Signum © SIGCD559 (59' • DDD)



There's something rather fun about the idea of pairing Shostakovich's two

shortest quartets – the Seventh and First – with the quartet which, if not actually his longest, is surely the heftiest, the most outgoing and the most obviously indebted both to his teacher Glazunov and to the folksy wartime manner of his rival Prokofiev (Daniel Jaffé's booklet note suggests an additional debt to Vissarion Shebalin). But the Second Quartet is where the Carducci Quartet begin this disc and there's no denying that it sets the tone.

Which is, in a word, muscular. Sculpted, too – these are athletic, upfront performances, clear in texture, forthright in tone and bold in articulation. Recorded at Wyastone,

the sound is simultaneously perfectly lucid and slightly matt in overall finish. Personally, I find that ideal for chamber music, but it may come as a surprise to those used to a more resonant sound, just as the Carducci's clean ensemble tone may require some adjustment from listeners who expect Borodin Quartet levels of tremulous intensity.

Not that these performances lack commitment. David Fanning, reviewing the Carducci's previous Shostakovich disc (6/15), found their playing 'metronomic', and the Second Quartet can feel slightly relentless: they might perhaps have made more distinction between Recitative and Romance in the second movement.

But there's greater flexibility and a sly wit at work in the First Quartet (listen to the final pizzicato note of the second movement for a lesson in comic timing) and the tension that the Carducci maintain throughout the first two movements of the Seventh finds an electrifying release in the third. A rewarding reminder that, in the 21st century, Shostakovich is no longer the preserve of any one performance tradition. **Richard Bratby**

Xenakis

Pléiades

DeciBells

Genuin © GEN19633 (48' • DDD)



Xenakis's orchestral works have not entered the repertoire but those

for ensemble have often found a niche; not least his percussion music, of which *Pléiades* is the grandest in conception and most wide-ranging in content. Completed in 1979, it stands at a crucial juncture – when technology enabled the rendering of graphic imagery into musical terms, the 'arborescences' principle that saw his instinctively gestural ideas harnessed to developmental processes. Not that the four sections of *Pléiades* are inherently symphonic; their unfolding is more akin to that of Reich's *Drumming*, for all that the coolly incremental changes found in the latter piece are a world away from those visceral contrasts in timbre and texture as pursued by Xenakis.

This new recording by the Basel-based group DeciBells is notable for its having

used newly prepared 'sixxen', the 19 metal bars of varying frequency, which gives their vital contribution audibly greater richness and subtlety. Add to this the use of skin rather than plastic heads on the drums and the music's expressive range is opened out accordingly – not least in the final and cumulative section, 'Mélanges', where the six-strong ensemble is brought together for an apotheosis that conveys its melding of isolated events into swarms with heady immediacy.

Pléiades has been recorded several times, with that by Red Fish Blue Fish part of a three-disc set that takes in all Xenakis's acknowledged percussion work. This remains the benchmark account, yet the distinctive approach as favoured by DeciBells makes rewarding listening.

Richard Whitehouse

Selected comparison:

Red Fish Blue Fish, Schick (3/07) (MODE) MODE171/3

'Fiddler's Blues'

Debussy *Clair de lune* (transcr D Matthews/Graffin) **Enescu** *Hora Unirei*^a. Violin Sonata No 3, 'dans le caractère populaire roumain', Op 25^a **Ravel** *Berceuse sur le nom de Gabriel Fauré*^a. Violin Sonata No 2^a **Ysaÿe** *Petite fantaisie romantique*^a. *Sonate posthume*, Op 27*bis* **Philippe Graffin** *vn*^a **Claire Désert** *pf* Avie Ⓢ AV2399 (68' • DDD)



The big story here is the first recording of a previously undiscovered seventh

unaccompanied violin sonata by Eugène Ysaÿe. Philippe Graffin explains its provenance in the booklet notes: apparently it was originally intended as the Sixth Sonata, dedicated (like the work that was eventually published as the Sixth) to the Spanish violinist Manuel Quiroga. Ysaÿe abandoned it for unknown reasons but not before sketching most of a three-movement work. Graffin supplied the closing section (less than a minute) of the finale 'in the most Ysaÿe-esque way I could', and I certainly couldn't spot the join.

Played with flourishing panache and easy command, it makes an electrifying opening to this deceptively titled recital: essentially a survey of the early 20th-century Parisian scene. Graffin and the pianist Claire Désert approach Enescu's mighty Third Sonata from an unashamedly Gallic perspective. No striving for folk effects here (Enescu provides more than enough Romanian folk colour, anyway); instead, there are

a brilliance, a sly humour and a Stravinsky-like clarity and bite that place this extraordinary music in the modernist tradition. Enescu was a contemporary of Brancusi, after all.

The pair dispatch it with the same controlled energy and sense of light and shade that they bring to Ravel's Sonata. There's a real feeling of dialogue; Désert is delicate but never precious, and the shorter pieces share the general mood of passion tempered by refinement. Graffin's gleaming, elegant virtuosity never degenerates either into lassitude or fireworks for fireworks' sake, and the exquisite little unaccompanied transcription of *Clair de lune* (co-written with David Matthews) deserves to become a standard encore – though I strongly suspect that, like everything on this splendid disc, it's not remotely as effortless as Graffin makes it sound. **Richard Bratby**

'Marais meets Corelli'

Biber Violin Sonata No 5 **Corelli** Violin Sonata, Op 5 No 5 **Forqueray** Chaconne La Buisson **Hume** Hark, hark. A Soldier's Galliard **Marais** Chaconne en rondeau. La sonnerie de Ste Geneviève du Mont de Paris. Suite No 4 **Marais/Corelli** Folia-Variations **Morel** Chaconne en trio **Lina Tur Bonet** *vn* **Ensemble Musica Narrans / Jakob Rattinger** *va da gamba* Pan Classics Ⓢ PC10395 (65' • DDD)



I agree with the business consultant Larry Alton when he describes the

Chiller font as a 'good choice for a Halloween party invitation but not much else'. Luckily the CD artwork that resembles an ICT school project from the 1990s does not do justice to this, at points, delightful recording from Ensemble Musica Narrans.

We are presented with a fictitious competition between viol and violin – frets versus fingers, so to speak. Rattinger on the viol begins with vigour. He marks out his territory with a toe-tapping, finger-clicking Galliard by Tobias Hume. Unfortunately, communicative energy and clarity do not continue in his performance of the Suite in D by Marais. The Gigue is scratchy and frantic; the Chaconne lacks lilt. Brief gloriousness, however, is achieved in the Sarabande, where Rattinger's luminous sound reaches full bloom.

Tur Bonet on the violin then steps up to the plate with Corelli's Op 5 No 5,

that staple of baroque violinists everywhere. Her sound is sweet, with superb clarity. But amid all the ornamental spaghetti there is little sense of pulse and dance. The fine border between energy and mess is too often transgressed: both *Vivaces* are scrappy. Inconsistent intonation – that bugbear when combining fretted and non-fretted instruments, as well as harpsichord continuo – mars many moments.

When viol and violin finally engage one another in Marais's *La sonnerie de Ste Genevieve du Mont de Paris*, this battle is tame. More welcome instead is Hume's 'Hark, hark', where Rattinger creates a world of skeletal mystery with an interesting interpretation of the earliest known notation of *col legno* (Hume instructs the performer to 'drum this with the back of your bow'). Special mention must be given to the opulent, sometimes sexy, harpsichord solo playing from Ralf Waldner in the *Folia* improvisations. In all, an annoyingly inconsistent recording.

Mark Seow

'The Romantic Horn'

Beethoven Horn Sonata, Op 17 **Dukas** Villanelle **Glazunov** *Rêverie*, Op 24 **Poulenc** *Élégie* **Schumann** Adagio and Allegro, Op 70 **Scriabin** Romance **F Strauss** Nocturno, Op 7 **R Strauss** Andante, Op *posth* **Vinter** Hunter's Moon **Richard Watkins** *hn* **Julius Drake** *pf* Signum Ⓢ SIGCD556 (65' • DDD)



Beethoven wrote his Horn Sonata for the travelling virtuoso Giovanni

Punto at such speed that, on the night of the premiere, he had to improvise the piano part. Or so the story goes, anyway. Richard Watkins repeats it in his entertaining booklet notes for this recital with the pianist Julius Drake, and I wonder if it didn't inform their interpretation of the piece too. This is grand, swaggering playing: two virtuosos out to bring the house down, and approaching the outer movements with an almost improvisatory freedom of tempo. It's not what you would call a historically informed reading, exactly, but it's undeniably impressive.

But qualities that represent strengths in the Beethoven can turn to weaknesses in the shorter, quieter pieces that make up much of the disc – all more or less familiar standards of the horn repertoire. For every moment of pure physical thrill (Watkins rockets away into the *Allegro* of



Marais meets Corelli: Lina Tur Bonet and Jakob Rattinger are supported by Ensemble Musica Narrans in their fictitious bout between viol and violin

Schumann's *Adagio and Allegro* in heroic style) there are passages in the pieces by Glazunov, Scriabin and the Strausses where you might prefer something on a slightly more intimate, slightly less epic scale.

It feels like they're playing in – and to – a large hall (it's actually the Britten Studio at Snape), and when Watkins is powering along on full beam there are moments when Drake almost vanishes. A pity, because where the music allows it – like a taut, intensely emotional account of Poulenc's *Élégie*, in memory of Dennis Brain – it's clear that Watkins and Drake have a rapport born of a long musical partnership. A bravura account of Gilbert Vinter's *Hunter's Moon* ends the disc with a flourish and leaves an unmistakable impression that these two distinguished players are certainly having a lot of fun.

Richard Bratby

'Tableaux de Provence'

Borne Fantaisie brillante sur des airs de Carmen
Debussy Rhapsodie **Decruck** Sonata **Maurice** Tableaux de Provence

Dominic Childs sax **Simon Callaghan** pf
 Resonus © RES10231 (55' • DDD)



The main connecting thread – one of several – linking the four works in this engaging French recital for alto saxophone is women. Two of the composers, Fernande Decruck (née Breilh, 1896-1954) and Paule Maurice (1910-67), were women. Debussy's *Rhapsodie*, worked on sporadically between about 1901 and 1911 and only completed after his death by Roger-Ducasse in 1919, was commissioned by a 'tenacious' American lady saxophonist, Elise Hall, much to the composer's irritation, while François Borne's *Fantaisie brillante* was inspired by the fictional heroine of Bizet's last completed opera.

Debussy's *Rhapsodie*, given here in a recently revised version by saxophonist and composer Vincent David, is not among his most inspired pieces, perhaps because of its difficult, one might say half-hearted gestation. It is not his worst piece either, and Dominic Childs gives a most sensitive account of it with accompanist

Simon Callaghan, bringing out the real Debussian textures and almost convincing that it is 100 per cent original. They are equally sympathetic to Decruck's lovely Sonata (1943, which also exists in a version for viola and piano), a beautifully lyrical work in four movements – or five, as the last is a fusion of nocturne and finale. It may not be great music – though I am quite taken with the lively central 'Fileuse' – but it is very well made and lovingly rendered here.

The remaining two pieces are slighter, although there is much poetry in the title work, by Maurice. There are five tableaux, meant here in its illustrative rather than dramatic sense, each one an exquisite miniature. Borne's *Carmen* Fantasy is essentially a medley of tunes, something a number of other composers have essayed, none of them as well as Busoni in his Sixth Sonatina. Borne's is pleasant enough and virtuosically delivered. Very good sound.

Guy Rickards

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Ettore Bastianini

Mark Pullinger celebrates the artistry of the short-lived Italian baritone, celebrated for his Verdi, but well represented on many recordings in a wide-ranging operatic repertoire

Every opera fan has their favourite singer whom they never saw live but wished they had. My operatic hero died before I was even born – although, by rights, that’s when he should have been in his vocal prime. Ettore Bastianini was the reigning Italian baritone of the late 1950s and early 1960s, singing regularly at La Scala, Milan, the Metropolitan Opera, New York, and the Wiener Staatsoper until his career was tragically cut short. In November 1962 he was diagnosed with throat cancer (kept a closely guarded secret), and he died on January 25, 1967, aged just 44.

Bastianini actually started out as a bass, but the baritone Gino Bechi, on a tour to Egypt, hinted that he was singing in the wrong register.

Rehearsing the final trio in *La forza del destino* with Luciano Bettarini, Bastianini continued singing the role of Padre Guardiano but to the tenor’s line, soaring – causing his teacher to exclaim, ‘I don’t think you are a bass at all!’

Bastianini retrained, making his baritone debut as Germont in *La traviata*. He scored successes in Russian repertoire in Italian translation, singing Yeletsky, Mazeppa and Prince Andrey (in the Western premiere of Prokofiev’s *War and Peace*) at Florence’s Maggio Musicale. His La Scala debut (as a baritone) was as Onegin opposite Renata Tebaldi’s Tatyana. Rumour had it that Tebaldi owned a private recording, but it never surfaced.

Verdi formed the core of Bastianini’s repertoire and it’s where I discovered him in my teens, purchasing a boxed LP set of *Il trovatore* on DG conducted by Tullio Serafin which was full of blood and fire. Carlo Bergonzi’s honeyed tenor impressed; Fiorenza Cossotto’s Azucena astonished; but it was Bastianini’s Conte di Luna that blew me away – a burnished, rich baritone, as dark as espresso, but with a top that bloomed. It was truly ‘a voice of bronze and velvet’, as described in the title of Marina Boagno’s book *Ettore Bastianini: Una voce di bronzo e di velluto* (1991).

For my 18th birthday, I was given a CD player. My first

A burnished, rich baritone, as dark as espresso, but with a top that bloomed. It was truly ‘a voice of bronze and velvet’

purchase was Decca’s miraculous 1958 *La bohème*. I swiftly explored further. Decca was Bastianini’s first ‘home’, although he had recorded Amonasro for Remington (released in 1955, since reissued on Preiser). In *La forza del destino* (also 1955) he joined Tebaldi’s glorious Leonora and Mario Del Monaco’s exciting (but stentorian) Alvaro. *La favorita* was recorded the same year, followed by Figaro in an *Il barbiere di Siviglia* full of the kind of ‘big voices’ who’d never get cast in Rossini today. His Carlo Gérard (*Andrea Chénier*) and Barnaba (*La Gioconda*)

are simply magnificent.

There followed a brief dalliance with Dischi Ricordi which resulted in Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*, later released on DG)

and Rigoletto, both singing

opposite a very young Renata Scotto. The *Rigoletto*, recorded in Florence’s Teatro della Pergola, is ridiculously good. However, it was damned in these pages by Philip Hope-Wallace, who found Bastianini ‘loud and quite exciting’ but accused him of a lack of subtlety compared with Tito Gobbi: ‘He hangs on to top notes in a showy way as if exhibiting the Jester as a young Turk in love’ (10/61). The recording has appeared on CD (Andromeda and Urania) but in constricted, boxy sound. Last year I stumbled upon an early LP pressing in the Wiener Staatsoper shop, and it sounds wonderful. It’s time for a company to do some major remastering for CD, please.

Four Verdi operas followed for DG, all recorded with La Scala: *Un ballo in maschera*, *Don Carlo*, *La traviata* and *Il trovatore*, with voices very much in the foreground (Decca

favoured more distant placement). Apart from the stylish Bergonzi, the tenors aren’t great but the much underrated Antonietta Stella is very good as Amelia, Elisabetta and Leonora, while Scotto is a superb Violetta. The *Don Carlo* boasts Boris Christoff’s magnificent Philip II. Bastianini is outstanding in all four and would doubtless have been lined up for a *Rigoletto* remake, but by the summer of 1964 his voice was shot to pieces so DG drafted in the unlikely Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau.

DEFINING MOMENTS

•1945 – November

Stage debut (as a bass) as Colline in *La bohème* in Ravenna

•1952 – January 17

Debut as a baritone – Germont in *La traviata* in Siena

•1955 – May 28

Legendary first night of Luchino Visconti’s new production of *La traviata*, with Maria Callas, Giuseppe di Stefano and conductor Carlo Maria Giulini

•1958 – July 26

Salzburg Festival debut – Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* under Karajan

•1962 – February 23

Covent Garden debut – Renato in *Un ballo in maschera*, his only Royal Opera House performance

•1965 – December 11

His final performance, as Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* at the Met Opera



A tragic loss to singing: Ettore Bastianini, here as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, died aged just 44

The greatest regret surrounds the firing of Bastianini from Karajan's 1961 *Otello* recording. Iago wasn't in his repertoire (he later sang a single performance in Cairo) and, as John Culshaw chronicles in his 1981 autobiography *Putting the Record Straight*, it became apparent that Bastianini had not learnt his part. Live recordings from the

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Verdi

La forza del destino
Molinari-Pradelli cond
Decca (12/55)

This is truly magnificent - still the best recording of the opera out there.

Salzburg Festival (*Don Carlo* and a gripping *Il trovatore*) are testament to a happier relationship with Karajan, as is Bastianini's gala sequence appearance on the Austrian conductor's Decca recording of *Die Fledermaus*, duetting outrageously with Giulietta Simionato in 'Anything you can do' from the musical *Annie Get Your Gun!* 6

Instrumental



David Threasher on the start of two new Mozart sonata cycles:

'The "difficulty" of this music lies in its restraint rather than in the logistics of throwing fistfuls of notes' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



Jed Distler enjoys an inventive album from pianist Karim Said:

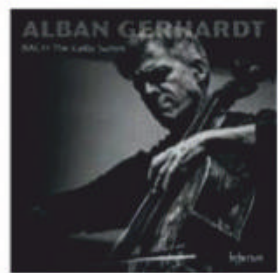
'Bull's Galliard features beautifully turned ornaments and carefully underlined emphasis on the composer's harmonic twists' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

JS Bach

Six Solo Cello Suites, BWV1007-1012

Alban Gerhardt *vc*

Hyperion Ⓢ Ⓢ CDA68261/2 (129' • DDD)



Like many cellists, Alban Gerhardt says he has been wary of recording the Bach

Suites before he was good and ready. Now he has finally done it, with a rider that it was his approaching 50th birthday that prompted him rather than any feeling that he has arrived at a settled interpretation. 'It can only be a snapshot', he cautions; 'this music always leaves room to search deeper and deeper'.

In any case, his performances do not sound like the kind that would ever have become set in stone; they are too personal and spontaneous-sounding for that. Take the Prelude of the Fourth Suite, a fantasia in Gerhardt's hands in which each subtly changed iteration of the tumbling broken-chord figures seems freshly interpreted, framing freer sections that roam adventurously. Or the Sixth Suite's teasingly lingering Gigue. Or the approach to repeats that makes each moment of return sound like an enthusiastic decision made right there and then. Movements, too, relate to each other convincingly: when the Fifth Suite's beautiful Sarabande has drifted drowsily to an end, the ensuing Gavotte is a perfectly judged wake-up; and after the loving caresses of the First Suite's Prelude, the Allemande is a carefree release.

Gerhardt can sound deliciously at ease in this music, whether moving with swift grace through a Sarabande or skipping with jaunty assurance through a Menuet or Gavotte. And his sound is glorious – a silvery tenor register (especially in the high-lying Sixth Suite) capping an overall tone that is rich without ever being overbearing. In the booklet he says that, while he 'oriented' himself with Baroque performance, he personally felt a need to marry deep tone to carefully used vibrato

and 'seemingly effortless articulation'. The use of vibrato is certainly well judged, but to my ears the articulation, though imaginatively varied, is often overdone, amounting at times to choppiness. It's a way of keeping air in the music, of course, but it can also be disruptive and at its worst some may find it irritating. By comparison, Truls Mørk's 2005 recording (Erato, 2/06) – another one of exquisite tonal beauty – sounds more naturally lyrical, while Steven Isserlis's *Gramophone* Award-winner of 2005-06 (Hyperion, 7/07) is also an endless display of eloquently expressed ideas, but with a less interrupted flow. But is his own personal way Gerhardt is no less a master. **Lindsay Kemp**

► See our interview with Alban Gerhardt on page 22

JS Bach

Chorale Partitas - Ach, was soll ich Sünder machen, BWV770; Christ, der du bist der helle Tag, BWV766; O Gott, du frommer Gott, BWV767; Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig, BWV768

Stephen Farr *org*

Resonus Ⓢ RES10234 (56' • DDD)

Played on a 2015 Bernard Aubertin organ



Here is a welcome addition to the Bach discography, with the chance to appreciate

the awesome compositional skills on display in these four works. This is also the first recording on the 2015 organ built by the firm of Aubertin for a private residence in Sussex. It's an instrument of outstanding craftsmanship and supreme artistry – ideal for this repertoire.

Thanks to the effortless virtuosity of Stephen Farr's magnificent playing, Bach's music is conveyed to the listener with eloquent clarity. Farr's performances are characterised by a stylish restraint, which suits both the music and the refined sounds of the organ. Occasionally one might wish for livelier articulation, in the manner of a string player; Farr shows he's capable of this in the second and fourth movements of

BWV767. Tempos are mainly well judged, and this results in a sparkling account of BWV768's eighth variation and a graceful flow to the same work's tenth variation. However, with movements that contain dancelike elements (such as the sarabande/minuet-like ninth movement of BWV770, plus the various gigue movements), the speeds are a little too slow to provide the appropriate rhythmic impetus.

Throughout the CD, there's a modest dynamic range – *p* to *mf* – giving us the opportunity to relish the lovely quiet stops. With the eight-foot flutes, though, there is a drawback: the bass notes are comparatively weak compared with the treble register, and this lessens the clarity of the harmonic writing. This problem is overcome when the higher-pitched four-foot flute is used, such as in the eighth movement of BWV767. Elsewhere, Farr finds some colourful solo registers among the 30 stops, and he always succeeds in achieving an equitable balance between different voices distributed around the three manuals and pedals.

The recording is very good and the informative booklet includes a complete list of Farr's registrations. I can wholeheartedly recommend this fine disc, giving threefold thanks to Farr, Aubertin and, of course, JS Bach. **Christopher Nickol**

Bax • Cohen

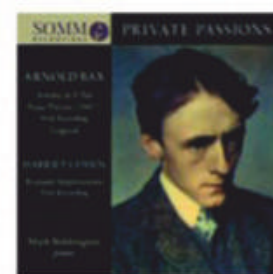
'Private Passions'

Bax Piano Sonata in E flat. In the Night. Legend.

Four Pieces Cohen Russian Impressions

Mark Bebbington *pf*

Somm Céleste Ⓢ SOMMCD0193 (79' • DDD)



First recordings of two sets of piano pieces by Arnold Bax and Harriet Cohen

(his charismatic muse and lover) adorn this latest helping of home-grown fare from the excellent Mark Bebbington. Cohen's four *Russian Impressions* (published in 1915 by Augener) prove a charming find, the first



Supreme composure: Mark Bebbington pairs music by Arnold Bax with newly discovered works by Bax's muse and lover Harriet Cohen

two especially ('Sunset on the Volga' and 'The Exile') winning Bax's approval. Bebbington lends them atmospheric and deftly affectionate advocacy, as he does the rather more substantial Four Pieces that Bax completed in March 1947. A skittish 'Fantastic March' (which slyly nods at *The Happy Forest* and the Fourth Symphony's boisterous finale) and 'Phantasie' (by turns forceful and dreamy) frame a tenderly songful 'Romanza' and fragrant 'Idyll'.

However, the real meat in this uncommonly enterprising and generous programme comes with the large-scale Sonata in E flat that Bax completed in June 1921 and subsequently reworked as his First Symphony (composing an entirely new slow movement in the process). Aficionados will already know all about the lasting virtues of John McCabe's pioneering version (Continuum, 11/92) and Michael Endres's no less compelling account (Oehms, 10/06); suffice it to say, they should waste no time in hearing this newcomer too! With his rock-solid technical armoury and supreme composure, Bebbington brings thrilling power and intoxicating poetry to Bax's turbulent, ruggedly beautiful inspiration, the sonata's gorgeous *Lento con molto espressione* centrepiece delivered with especial perception.

Rounding off proceedings are magnificent performances of the slumberingly intense 1914 passacaglia *In the Night* ('That piece means such a lot to me – I think I know its very soul', Cohen wrote to the composer) and the 1935 *Legend* (a darkly brooding essay very much in the bardic spirit of the Third Piano Sonata, *Northern Ballad* No 2 and *Winter Legends*). Visitors to the Somm website can download an extra track, namely the central *Lento espressivo* of the so-called *Salzburg Sonata* – a Mozartian pastiche that Bax wrote as light relief after completing the 'hippopotamus-like' scoring of his 1937 orchestral march *London Pageant*. (At 1'46" listen out for a fetching idea destined to reappear in the slow movement of Bax's Violin Concerto.)

In summary, a terrific issue. Both Graham Parlett's annotation and Paul Arden-Taylor's engineering are first-rate. Now, I wonder whether Bebbington might be persuaded to turn his attention to Bax's four numbered piano sonatas.

Andrew Achenbach

Beethoven

Piano Sonatas – No 31, Op 110; No 32, Op 111.

Bagatelles, Op 126

Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*

BIS © BIS2208 (63' • DDD)



Yevgeny Sudbin is not an artist to go into the studio lightly and it's a bold move to

choose as his first solo Beethoven disc the last two sonatas, together with the Op 126 Bagatelles.

One of the delights of Sudbin's playing, whatever the repertoire, is his ability to convey a wide colouristic palette – indeed, he talks in his thoughtful booklet essay about how painterly he finds the Bagatelles. He also notes the sheer range of emotions explored in Op 110, from human compassion in the first movement via edgy humour in the Scherzo to lament and then finally triumph. That humanity is very much evident in his reading of the *Moderato cantabile*, which he imbues with an unusual degree of gentleness and a real airiness to the more delicate writing which is very winning. Yet I find him less convincing in the brief Scherzo: he has a tendency to pause slightly before accents (for example at 0'08" and 1'30"), disrupting the sense of momentum, though the hushed close is well judged. And the *Adagio ma non troppo*, though

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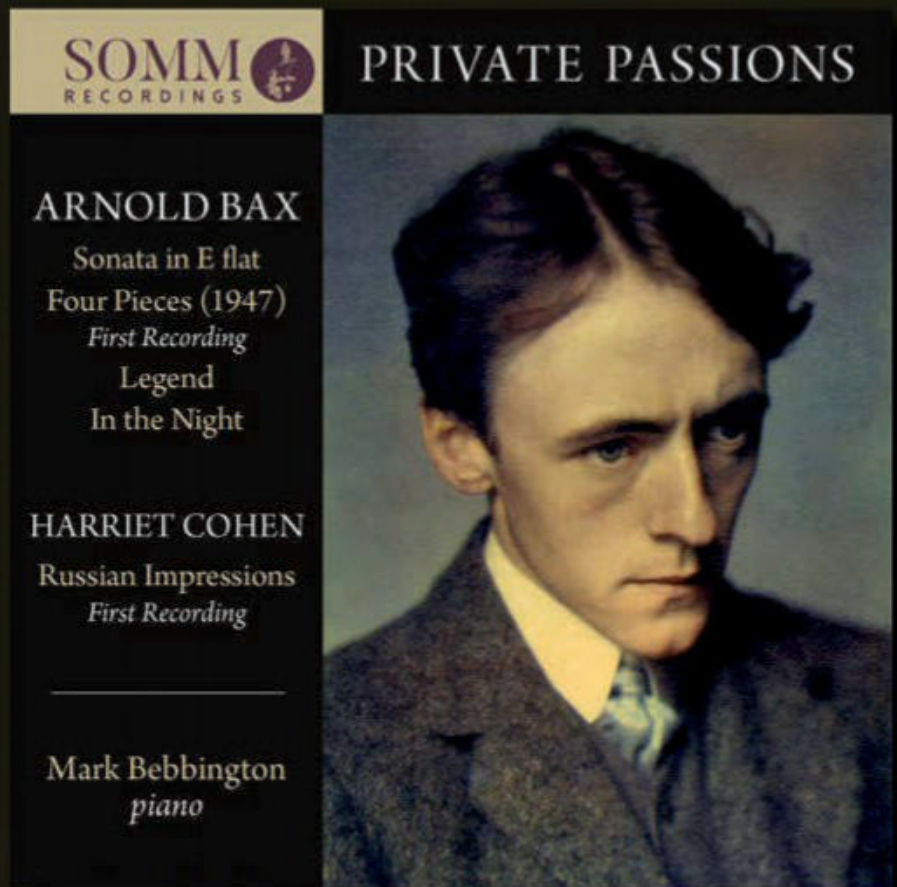
PRIVATE PASSIONS

Piano music by Arnold Bax & Harriet Cohen

MARK BEBBINGTON, Piano

"Truly a remarkable pianist"

The Times



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given a nice haloed sound, doesn't ultimately plumb the depths of readings such as that of Uchida, who is quite astounding here. Sudbin's control of the voicings of the fugue are very impressive but the fiery outbursts (4'46") don't terrify as they can do.

Overall, though, this is an impressive Op 110. The last sonata leaves me with more reservations. On the plus side are Sudbin's sound, which never has a hint of edginess, and his refined sense of dynamic range. But the very opening, even though marked *Maestoso*, needs to have a tension to it that drives the music forwards, whereas this sounds altogether too world-weary, as if sapped of energy. And as the *Allegro con brio* proceeds, Sudbin's tendency for point-making at times disrupts the flow of the music (try at 4'20" or 7'20"). The theme of the Arietta itself is sensitively voiced and the ensuing variations are full of beautiful touches, time and again showing how much thought has gone into his music-making, though the jazzy variation could be more anarchic. But I don't get the sense that Sudbin yet lives this music as the greatest do (it's not a matter of mere age or experience – Levit was doing this in his twenties). Ultimately I want my Op 111 to sound more elemental than we have here – Goode and Brendel in their very different ways do precisely this.

Subdin brings plenty of personality to the six Op 126 Bagatelles. I like very much the power and drama of the second, achieved without the climaxes becoming overbearing, though in the *presto* No 4 he is so fast that he sounds out of breath, Osborne giving more time for its ire to speak. And of the slower bagatelles, the first is a little self-conscious in effect (Osborne here finds a more natural pulse and even a touch of playfulness) while in the third Sudbin is perhaps a degree too deliberate, compared to which Anderszewski conjures a hypnotic dreamworld that is very potent. In the constantly shifting moods of the last of the set, again, Sudbin slightly over-romanticises the *Andante amabile* section, softening Beethoven's shocking juxtapositions of tempo and mood.

Harriet Smith

Piano Sonatas – selected comparisons:

Brendel (6/71^R, 11/75^R) (PHIL) 438 374-2PM2

Goode (3/94) (NONE) 7559 79328-2

Uchida (5/06) (PHIL) 475 6935PH

Levit (11/13) (SONY) 88883 70387-2

Bagatelles – selected comparisons:

Anderszewski (6/08) (VIRG/ERAT) 502111-2

Osborne (7/12) (HYPE) CDA67879

► See The Musician & the Score on page 72

Beethoven

Variations on a Waltz by Anton Diabelli, Op 120.
Bagatelles – Op 119; 'Für Elise', WoO59

Imogen Cooper *pf*

Chandos ⑤ CHAN20085 (79' • DDD)



Somehow it was a while since I had heard the Op 119 Bagatelles, and I'm grateful to Imogen Cooper for reminding me what treasures they have to offer, sometimes at moments towards the ends of pieces when you least expect them. It takes real artistry to apply such subtle variations of expressive pressure from phrase to phrase as Cooper delights in. Every detail here is patiently appreciated and gracefully addressed: neither self-regardingly spelt out nor diminishing pieces to the status of a mere appetiser.

Of course, the *Diabelli* Variations are still the main event, and here the demands are of a different order. The determined yet musically inflected Theme promises much. But the placing of its final cadence and the deliberate non-*attacca* into Variation 1 already seems to be making a point. Is Cooper deliberately going against the 'normal' modern way of dramatising the set, which stresses drive and continuity across groups of variations, in order to suggest a quasi-symphonic overall design? Is she suspicious of the tendency to cast the work in super-human terms? Certainly she is as responsive to Beethoven's markings as she is in the Bagatelles, and as fleet-footed as she needs to be in the *presto* variations (Nos 10, 15 and 19). But she does tend to shy away, it seems to me, from some of Beethoven's wilder flights of fancy. Her tempo is unstable and her dotted rhythms curiously un-incisive in the eruptively comedic Var 13, for instance, while Var 15 is hardly *sempre pp* (by contrast, Var 16 is so much harsher than the designated single *forte* as to distort the tuning). And yet there are so many wonderful things in Cooper's handling of the final variations that the abiding impression is of a high intelligence guiding the overall journey.

Not quite a top-drawer version, then, but only because that drawer is already so generously filled. Chandos's recorded sound has a natural glow without ever compromising clarity. Authoritative booklet notes too (William Drabkin).

David Fanning

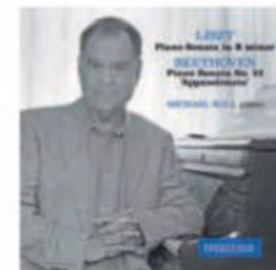
Beethoven • Liszt

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57^a **Liszt** Piano Sonata, S178^b

Michael Roll *pf*

Heritage ⑤ HTGCD184 (59' • ADD/DDD)

Recorded ^b1978; ^alive in Portland, OR, 2008



The back cover of this disc states that, since his victory in the first-ever Leeds International Piano Competition in 1963 at the age of 17, 'Michael Roll has enjoyed a hugely successful career on the concert platform ... His recorded legacy, however, is surprisingly small.' This CD, which juxtaposes an unreleased 1978 recording of the Liszt Sonata with a live 2008 account of the Beethoven *Appassionata*, hardly backs up the first claim; nor does it suggest that the second is likely to be rectified.

Roll is evidently a musical poet, and he has a sure sense of lyricism and musical drama. But these qualities are not enough to save the disc. In the Liszt there is some delightful *jeu perlé* rippling in the *pianissimo* passagework; but the overall drama is too fragmented to be convincing and Roll's *fortissimo* has a persistent thudding quality. Perhaps the recording conditions did him no favours. In the Beethoven, despite an undeniable sense of excitement and some perceptive voicings, there are simply too many approximations and mis-hits. Particularly in the finale, exhilaration is displaced by struggle, and the ovation at the end brings more a sense of relief than of satisfaction, as if for a long-distance runner who has just completed the course against all the odds. **Michelle Assay**

Dohnányi

'The Complete Solo Piano Music, Vol 4'

Six Concert Études, Op 28. Six Pieces, Op 41.

Passacaglia, Op 6. Rondo alla zingarese.

Suite in the Olden Style, Op 24

Martin Roscoe *pf*

Hyperion ⑤ CDA68054 (81' • DDD)



A set of fearsomely demanding concert études, a neo-Gothic exuberant Passacaglia, a Baroque-meets-Romantic suite and a Lisztian cycle of character pieces, topped off by a frenetic transcription of the Hungarian rondo from Brahms's G minor Piano Quartet, make up the final disc of Martin Roscoe's survey of Dohnányi's piano works.

For me the highlight is the Passacaglia, whose combination of complex counterpoint and a thrilling, apparently improvisatory style make it fully worthy of concert-hall rehabilitation, as Jeremy Nicholas also noted in his review of Daniel Röhm's account (CPO, 9/16). Roscoe achieves more clarity than Röhm, and the Hyperion piano sound is more pleasing, but I can't help wishing for a little more *Sturm und Drang* here, even a sense of danger, of the kind Dohnányi himself probably felt as he approached the end of the work at its London premiere, when he reportedly improvised the last few bars, having failed to complete the piece on time.

Roscoe makes no attempt to match the composer's recorded tempos for the *Six Concert Études*, Op 28. The results are effortless and characterful if, again, a little low on risk. The last étude (Capriccio) has attracted the attention of some of great pianists, including Rachmaninov. Stephen Hough's account is stupendously clear and efficient, at an exhilarating tempo (on his first 'Piano Album', now Erato), but it is only Horowitz at his most spellbindingly manic (Naxos Historical) who shows how caprice can truly manifest in music (he clocks in at 2'11", compared to Roscoe's 2'48").

Composed around the same time as Debussy's exploratory, Prokofiev's iconoclastic and Bartók's future-looking studies, Dohnányi's set, as with so much of his output, looks to the past, mining techniques that had already been extensively probed by the great Romantic composer-pianists. His interest in the Baroque is most explicit in the *Suite in the Olden Style*. Roscoe brings a touch of grace à l'ancienne to the more lyrical movements while not holding back from suitably Romantic expressivity for the six Op 41 pieces, in particular the poignant final movement, 'Cloches'. As always, he shines in the layering of Dohnányi's expansive, quasi-orchestral textures, responding astutely to rhapsodic changes in moods and colours. In short, an eloquent conclusion to a reliable and revealing series. **Michelle Assay**

Mozart

'Complete Piano Sonatas, Vol 1'

Piano Sonatas - No 3, K281; No 11, K331; No 12, K332; No 17, K570

Jean Muller *pf*

Hänssler Classic © HC18068 (71' • DDD)

Mozart

'Piano Sonatas, Vol 1'

Piano Sonatas - No 2, K280; No 6, K284; No 17, K570. Fantasia, K397

Peter Donohoe *pf*

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0191 (69' • DDD)



It's not unusual for pianists more associated with later, large-scale virtuoso music to reach a rapprochement with Mozart. Jean Muller has received praise in these pages for his Chopin Ballades (Fondamenta, 4/12), Liszt (JCH Productions, A/14) and a recital featuring Brahms, Prokofiev and Ligeti (Soupir Editions, 1/17). Peter Donohoe surely needs no introduction but his recent turn on disc to Mozart has raised eyebrows among those who see him almost typecast as a specialist in Romantic and especially Russian fare since his 1982 success at the International Tchaikovsky Competition.

Muller maintains clean lines in his Mozart, relishing the fingery brilliance of outer movements – a translation into Enlightenment terms of the 'savage technical voltage' admired in his Chopin by Bryce Morrison. He is also sensitive to the *cantabile* of slow movements and the statement of the theme in K331's opening variations. There's plenty of personality, too, in the slight alterations on repeats (try K331's *Alla turca* finale) and in an individual approach to tempo – the little speedings-up in the transition to the second subject in the *Allegro* of K332. Here, though, he might have made more of Mozart's swiftly alternating *forte* and *piano*, which are more surely delineated in the hands of, say, Marc-André Hamelin (Hyperion) or Maria João Pires (DG). Other touches of accentuation – the *sfz* and *fp* markings in Var 5 of K332 – similarly pass for little, which is a shame, given the imagination with which so much is played here.

The two pianists come up against each other in the B flat major Sonata, K570. Donohoe's *Adagio* adds almost a minute and a half to Muller's and is perhaps more literal, more metronomic, although the former is capable of a true *pianissimo*, which the latter too often shies away from. The closing *Allegretto* is more impish in Donohoe's hands, too, at a tempo just a notch faster.

Muller's Steinway is very much in focus in Marco Batistella's single-microphone recording, whereas Donohoe's Bechstein is a more matt-sounding presence, more obviously alone in a biggish hall (Birmingham Conservatoire, recorded by Paul Arden-Taylor). This seems to suit Donohoe, who naturally enjoys opening

out the bass of the piano in a way that might, perhaps, have eluded Mozart's fortepiano of the 1770s.

The 'difficulty' of this music lies in its restraint rather than in the logistics of throwing fistfuls of notes from the piano, where Donohoe might be presumed to be more at home. He audibly relishes the challenge, however, gleefully letting the semiquavers almost run away in Var 4 of K284's variations but offering a Var 5 of uncommon delicacy and sensitively ornamenting Var 11's cantilena.

For anyone who might consider Donohoe miscast in Mozart, it should be remembered that this was his choice of repertoire, not one imposed on him by an A&R department. Accordingly, he plays these pieces with a personal involvement that is as touching as it is fascinating and finely considered. **David Threasher**

Prokofiev

Piano Sonatas - No 2, Op 14; No 5, Op 38/135.

Ten Pieces, Op 12

Lukas Geniušas *pf*

Mirare © MIR412 (59' • DDD)



The story of the underdog supposedly autodidact Frenchman Lucas Debargue

getting to the finals of 2015 Tchaikovsky competition stole the media limelight. Another Lukas, the Lithuanian-Russian Geniušas, who shared the silver medal with George Li, didn't exactly fit the bill for a Cinderella-like fairy tale, since his father Petras and his grandmother Vera Gornostaeva were both renowned pianists, and Gornostaeva – Lukas's first teacher – was behind many successful competition winners.

But there is certainly an abundance of fairy-tale characterisation in this first instalment of a promised complete survey of Prokofiev's sonatas. The early Second Sonata and the Ten Pieces, Op 12, frame the elusively Poulencian (just compare the opening motif to that of Poulenc's Flute Sonata) Fifth Sonata. And story-telling fantasy, conveyed with a seemingly infinite variety of touch, teams up with youthful bravado, fire and mercurial temperament in Geniušas's superior accounts of all three works.

Every one of the multiple personalities of the Second Sonata is swiftly and sensitively delineated, and you can almost see the cast of carnivalesque characters and creatures parading to the stage in the Op 12 pieces. A judicious dose of piquancy makes all the



Bold and idiomatic: Lukas Geniušas brings character and personality to Prokofiev

difference to the Fifth Sonata, which in other hands can come across as merely bland. If risk-taking and capriciousness are not your idea of a good thing in Prokofiev, you can always take the safer options of Berman (Chandos, 9/09) or Donohoe (Somm, 6/13); for a slightly moderated grotesquerie in the Second Sonata, fellow Tchaikovsky competitor and first prize-winner Dmitry Masleev (Melodiya, 1/18) is almost up there. But Geniušas is certainly a bold and immensely idiomatic entrant into the already highly competitive arena of recorded Prokofiev cycles. **Michelle Assay**

'The French Piano School' ⓘ

'Debussy Recordings for French Odéon, 1928-30'

Marius-François Gaillard *pf*

'Recordings for Pathé, 1931-38'

Carmen Guilbert *pf*

APR ⓘ (two discs for the price of one) **APR6025**
(150' • ADD)

'The French Piano School' ⓘ

'Recordings from French Odéon, 1927-29'

Victor Staub *pf*

'Recordings from HMV, Victor Japan and Others, 1929-55'

Lazare-Lévy *pf*

APR ⓘ (two discs for the price of one) **APR6028**
(152' • ADD)



APR is launching a fascinating new series of recordings devoted to French pianism called 'The French Piano School'. As Charles Timbrell writes in his authoritative series essay, 'For some 150 years a distinctively French piano style was nourished at the Paris Conservatoire'. As Europe's oldest conservatory, the Conservatoire played a considerable role in making the French capital a mecca for piano-playing and manufacture during the first half of the 19th century. Traditions inculcated at the Conservatoire, valuing clear, precise, rapid execution emanating from the fingers and wrist rather than from the arm and shoulder, along with judicious pedalling, would remain characteristic of the French school well into the 20th century. Of course, some famous French pianists, including Cortot, Marcelle Meyer and Yves Nat, are already well represented on CD. The aim of the APR series is to present important figures whose recordings are less well known outside France.

Marius-François Gaillard's Debussy recordings from 1928-30 are of historical

significance. Gaillard was the first pianist to publicly perform all of Debussy's then-known piano music and he did this in 1920, two years after the composer's death, repeating the cycle a number of times in subsequent years. Perhaps most striking is his surprisingly sparse use of both rubato and pedal in these performances. And while some of his tempos seem spot-on, others ('Reflets dans l'eau', 'La soirée dans Grenade' and 'La cathédrale engloutie', for instance) sound rushed. During the 1930s Gaillard turned increasingly to conducting and composition, and his contributions as a pianist receded in popular memory.

Even less well known is the Marguerite Long pupil Carmen-Marie-Lucie Guilbert, represented here by four pieces by Debussy, five by Fauré (her recording of the *Thème et variations* is apparently the first) and Ravel's 'Alborada del gracioso'. Guilbert was also a noted jazz and popular pianist, which perhaps informs some of the relaxed freedom of her lovely interpretations. Despite the relative brevity of her career, she was clearly a player of great authority and virtuosity.

For me, Victor Staub's recordings, all from the late 1920s, are the most revelatory of the lot. His exquisitely pellucid touch, as consistent in fleet passagework as in sustained *cantabile* playing, is a joy to the ear. Staub's ample rubato always seems

integral to the music's expressive demands without exceeding the boundaries of good taste, even by today's more strait-laced standards. Extraordinary speed in Daquin's 'Le coucou' and Mendelssohn's 'Spinning Song' retains remarkable clarity and crispness. Four Schumann pieces – three of the *Fantasiestücke* and Liszt's transcription of 'Frühlingsnacht' – are refreshingly free of sentimentality, while an unorthodox yet winning take on Sinding's *Rustle of Spring* is amusing. A sophisticated sense of drollery envelopes Debussy's 'Golliwogg's Cake Walk' and 'Minstrels'. If Staub's Rigaudon from Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin* is slower and more deliberate than we've come to expect, it is perhaps more consistent with the hopping steps of the Baroque dance.

Intelligence is the watchword for Lazare-Lévy's probing interpretations of a wide repertoire. He plays works by Chabrier, Dukas and Roussel with a conviction that suggests they might be neglected masterworks of the pianistic canon. Schubert's A flat Impromptu borders on the routine but pieces by Couperin and Daquin come off as stylish and heartfelt. Two of Schumann's *Fantasiestücke* and a pair of Chopin Mazurkas are perhaps Lazare-Lévy at his best. On the other hand, a recording of Mozart's K475 Fantasia from 1931 seems mired in a 19th-century approach, while three sonatas (K330, 331 and 310) from 1952 and 1955 leave one wondering if they would be more expressively rendered on a typewriter.

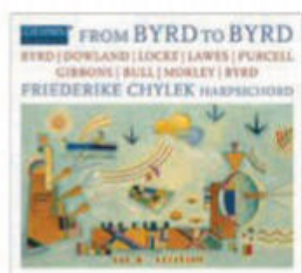
The booklets contain informative notes for Gaillard and Guilbert by Caroline Rae and for Lazare-Lévy and Staub by Frédéric Gaussin, as well as APR's customarily thorough discographic documentation. The transfers are excellent. **Patrick Rucker**

'From Byrd to Byrd'

Byrd The Bells. Fantasia in C. Hornpipe. Lord Willoughby's Welcome Home. Monsieur's Alman I. Monsieur's Alman II. Pavan and Galliard, 'Bray'. Prelude in G minor **Dowland** If my complaints (arr ?Byrd). Piper's Pavan and Galliard **Dowland/Bull** Piper's Galliard – I; II **Gibbons** Mask: The Fairest Nymph **W Lawes** Musick's Handmaid – Symphony; Saraband **Locke** Melothesia – Suite in D **Morley** Alman in C **Purcell** Suite, Z668

Friederike Chylek *hpd*

Oehms © OC1702 (67' • DDD)



Friederike Chylek, a German harpsichordist who has specialised in

English keyboard music of the 16th and 17th centuries, has released her second album for Oehms Classics focusing, like the first, on her core repertoire, with a particular focus on William Byrd. She is determined to present the charismatic face of Byrd, works that are instantly accessible to contemporary ears, performed with an easy-going clarity that makes even the more abstract, intricately motivic works sound evocative and sensuous. Her harpsichord, a reproduction of a 1624 Ruckers instrument, is bright and lively, and the tuning rarely gives the ear any of the green lemon flavours that other harpsichordists prefer in this music (a sound I occasionally miss in these readings).

Byrd's works, including character pieces, hornpipes and the magnificent *The Bells* (in which listeners may detect a direct antecedent to contemporary minimalism) are supplemented with music by Dowland, Matthew Locke, William Lawes, Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Morley, and the Suite in D minor by Purcell (extending the chronology of the recording from the mid-16th almost to the dawn of the 18th century). The suite by Locke shows the player at her best, its short movements played with tenderness, easy ornamentation and unfussy dispatch. She brings the same sensibility to the Purcell suite, which is elastic, transparent and, despite the stately tempo, never particularly grand. Richard Egarr improvised a prelude for this three-movement collection, extending it, emphasising the richness of Purcell's creation. He rendered the Almand with particular darkness and deliberation and the concluding Hornpipe with a ferocious snap and martial vigour. In Chylek's hands, the suite pearls along pleasantly, for the most part brightly, with thin and fleet ornamentation, and without underscoring the musical sophistication of this exceptional little collection.

Chylek is drawn to charm, which she renders with refinement and without distortion. If the Byrd Fantasia in C is somewhat amorphous, there are more than ample compensations in the shorter, less abstruse pieces. Other performers will make the case that this is great music; Chylek succeeds in proving that it also has surface appeal in abundance. **Philip Kennicott**

Purcell – selected comparison:

Egarr (10/08) (HARM) HMU90 7428

'Influences'

JS Bach Aria variata, BWV989

Bartók Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs, Op 20 Sz74 **Ives** Piano Sonata No 1

Messiaen Cantéyodjayâ

Tamara Stefanovich *pf*

Pentatone © PTC5186 741 (80' • DDD/DSD)



Each of the four pieces on this disc specifically embraces diverse cultural references:

Ives's First Sonata's American popular idioms *circa* 1900 (rags and marches), the Hindu rhythms informing Messiaen's *Cantéyodjayâ*, Bartók's treatment of Hungarian peasant songs and Bach's ingenuous appropriation of Italian Baroque styles in his BWV989 Variations. As a programme per se it seems top-heavy, with the monumental Ives placed first and Bach at the end. It turns out to be a programming masterstroke, as you'll soon find out.

The overall excellence of Tamara Stefanovich's interpretations is enhanced by a superb multichannel recording characterised by full-bodied ambience and concert-hall realism. Stefanovich voices Ives's thick and ringing chordal dissonances from the bottom up, taking full measure of the music's spaciousness and resonant potential. This works notably well in the first and final movements' gloriously drawn-out codas. Curiously, Stefanovich holds back in the 'In the Inn' chorus, missing the unbridled vocal revelry that William Masselos brought out in his pioneering mono and stereo recordings (RCA, 7/67, desperately in need of reissue), and she also underplays the ragtime rhythms so petulantly projected by Jeremy Denk and Joanna MacGregor. But these are minor quibbles.

Charles Rosen called Bartók 'a 20th-century composer who was a 19th-century pianist'. Certainly Stefanovich approaches the *Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs* with the kind of singing line and nuanced warmth that we don't usually hear from bleaker and bangier Bartókians! Compare, for example, Florent Boffard's ample-toned yet relatively austere phrasing of the first piece (Mirare, 1/19) next to Stefanovich's flexibility, or his fierce, harder-hitting rhythm in the second piece alongside Stefanovich's beguiling lilt, and you'll get what I mean.

In *Cantéyodjayâ*, Stefanovich takes greater care than many pianists over bringing out dynamic contrasts, observing the composer's rests and finding melodic shapes within the asymmetric rhythms. The clotted chords ring out with every note firmly in place and thoughtfully voiced. One might say that Peter Hill's like-minded interpretation (Unicorn, 11/86) is dabbed in half-tints, while Stefanovich favours oils and a wide variety of brushes.



Beguiling: Tamara Stefanovich brings a wide-ranging mastery to repertoire ranging from Bach to Ives and Messiaen

After more than an hour of substantial 20th-century fare, the appearance of Bach proves a veritable tonic in Stefanovich's hands. What poignant embellishments in the Aria, what a combination of refined precision and long line in Variation 2. The pianist's detached articulation in Var 6 takes telling shape by her slight crescendos on certain up-beats, akin to a choreographer getting dancers to move simply by saying the word 'and'. And in the concluding Var 10, notice the pianist's tiny shifts of colour to acknowledge harmonically miraculous moments. If Ives, Bartók and Messiaen reveal Stefanovich's wide-ranging mastery, the Bach reveals her soul as well. **Jed Distler**

'Legacy'

Brahms Piano Sonata No 2, Op 2 **Bull** Lord Lumley's Pavan and Galliard **Byrd** Fantasia. Qui passe: For My Lady Nevell **Morley** Nancy **Schoenberg** Suite, Op 25 **Tomkins** Earl Strafford Pavan and Galliard. The Hunting Galliard **Webern** Kinderstück: Lieblich. Klavierstück: In Tempo eines Menuetts

Karim Said *pf*

Rubicon © RCD1014 (74' • DDD)



The thematic trajectory of Karim Said's recital concerns the connection between

composers and their disciples, with works by William Byrd and his pupils Thomas Tomkins, Thomas Morley and John Bull, Arnold Schoenberg and his pupil Anton Webern, and Schoenberg's role model Johannes Brahms. Said intersperses Webern miniatures between Renaissance selections, while bracketing Schoenberg's Op 25 Suite with works by Bull and Tomkins, and then placing Brahms's early Piano Sonata No 2 before a closing Byrd Fantasia. While the pianist recommends that you absorb his programme from start to finish in sequence, I can't see why one cannot also listen to the individual performances out of context.

Before discussing Said's music-making, I must get sonic gripes out of the way, in regard to the slightly hollow-sounding engineering and the way the pianist's full-bodied tone turns glassy, monochrome and congested in loud moments. Otherwise, his masterly and creative interpretations hold great interest. In Morley's *Nancy*, note Said's alluring shifts in articulation and balance in repeated passages. He makes every note count in the posthumously published Webern pieces, where the ideal tempos help define the music's elusive long lines. Bull's Galliard features beautifully turned ornaments and carefully underlined emphasis of the composer's unpredictable harmonic twists.

In the Schoenberg, Said adroitly differentiates the Praeludium's close-

lying counterpoint and makes a compelling case for his slower-than-usual tempo in the Intermezzo. Said's genial shaping of the Menuett and Trio casts this music in a lilting light that differs from Maurizio Pollini's etched bleakness or Glenn Gould's dry-point humour.

From start to finish, Said not only displays a complete command of the Brahms Sonata's myriad challenges but also reveals the extent to which he inhabits the music. He shares Sviatoslav Richter's incisively effortless octave technique and knack for gradually meting out rubato in the manner of a seasoned conductor (the first movement's development section, for example). The slow movement sings forth with shimmering transparency and lyrical restraint, evoking Arthur Rubinstein's likening of Brahms's keyboard idiom to 'chamber music for solo piano'. While some may feel that Said's Scherzo is a tad sedate for a real *allegro*, the tempo choice allows for clear and unambiguous execution of the smaller note values, as well as for the music's dark undercurrents to register. Pianists will be humbled by Said's remarkable legato control and pristine trills in the finale's *sostenuto* opening, not to mention how he contours contrapuntal lines with prismatic purity and stunning poise. Similar ambidextrous aplomb informs the Byrd Fantasia that brings this fascinating programme to a close. **Jed Distler**

HK Gruber

A patchwork approach to styles and influences makes this Austrian composer's music hard to pin down, says Paul Kilbey

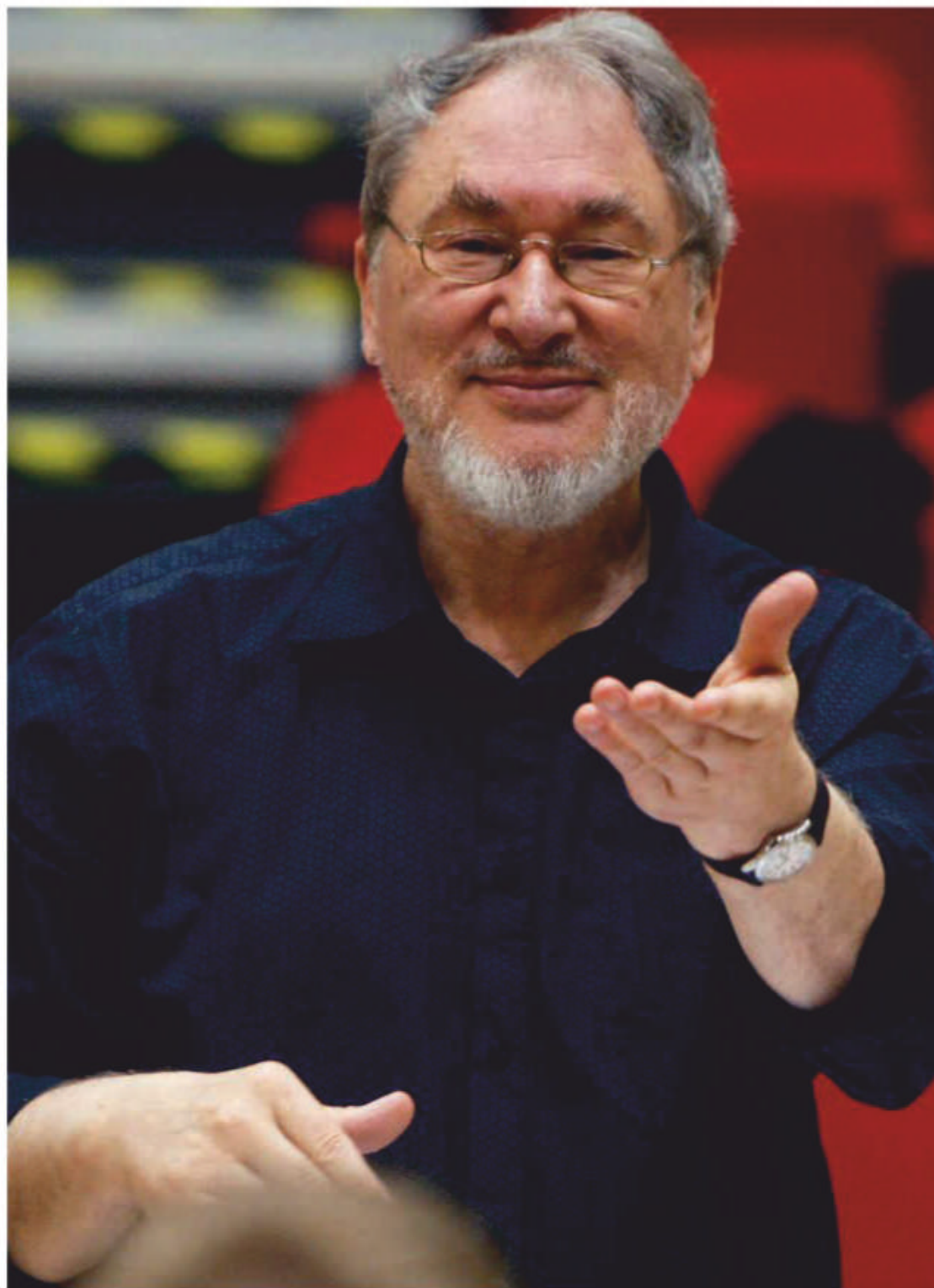
The Vienna Boys' Choir: is there anything subversive about it? If so, it is not immediately obvious from the angelic confections that are its stock in trade. The Viennese composer Heinz Karl (better known as HK) Gruber, famous for his 'pan-demonium' *Frankenstein!!* (1976-77) – an exuberant setting of sinister children's poetry by HC Artmann – gained his nickname 'Nali' during his time singing with that august institution in the 1950s, probably, he has said in an interview, 'because of the way I snored'.

Presumably he was not snoring during the concerts. Yet Gruber and the legendary Sängerknaben seem at first to be an odd match. Formative though the experience of singing there surely was, Gruber has become a composer who specialises in precisely the sort of gleeful subversion of expectations that you don't usually associate with his alma mater. His is a music of lurking shadows and eccentric puppetmasters – perhaps even mad scientists. *Frankenstein*, Gruber writes, 'is not the protagonist' of his famed showpiece, 'but the figure behind the scenes whom we forget at our peril. Hence the exclamation marks.'

Another question: is there something *Frankenstein*-like about Gruber's music in general? Even beyond his most famous work, he has taken a patchwork approach to styles and influences – a Stravinskian torso, perhaps, stitched to Weill's head, Eisler's arms, a few of Berg's fingers, and so on – in contradistinction to the rather strict aesthetic of Boulez, Stockhausen and their peers, to which composers of Gruber's generation were expected to subscribe. Yet Gruber's music does not sound monstrous except when he wants it to, and it is surely the music of the rejected Darmstadt orthodoxy that sounds more like it was made in a laboratory.

Recent works are harder still to categorise, though many continue to engage rather quizzically with light music of some sort

Eclectic though Gruber's tastes are, Weill and Eisler, and particularly their engagement with popular styles, have been an especially important reference point: he has sung, conducted and recorded works by both of them, and they have left their trace in his own compositions. Cabaret-style 'light music' elements return again and again – not just in those works like *Frankenstein!!* and the superbly sinister *Zeitstimmung* (1995-96), in which Gruber himself is the brilliant, entertaining chansonnier, but throughout his catalogue. He founded the curiously named 'MOB art & tone ART' ensemble with fellow Viennese composers Kurt Schwertsik and Otto Zykan in the late 1960s, in a more or less direct challenge to the atonal norms of the day ('tone ART'



refers to the German *Tonart*, or key). Gruber's light-hearted *Three MOB Pieces* (1968, revised in 1977, and arranged for trumpet and small orchestra in 1999) are surviving evidence from this anarchic period, and *Frankenstein!!* has its roots in a 1971 suite for the ensemble. *Manhattan Broadcasts* (1962-64) for 'light orchestra' is from even earlier in Gruber's career, 'the reflection in a Viennese mirror of American dance-band music', as Paul Driver puts it.

More recent works are harder still to categorise, though many continue to engage rather quizzically with light music of one sort or another. Perhaps inevitably, given Gruber's Viennese roots, Johann Strauss II crops up from time to time, as is evident even from the name of his most recent opera, *Tales from the Vienna Woods* (2011-14), premiered in Bregenz in 2014. It is based on Odön von Horváth's dark social satire, written as the Weimar Republic descended into chaos – and the Strauss reference is decidedly ironic.

Gruber also takes on the Waltz King in the orchestral work *Charivari* (1981, rev 1984/1999), which does to Strauss's *Perpetuum mobile* something like what Ravel did to the waltz in *La valse*. Strauss's blithe ostinato is made to stand for Austria's occasional tendency to forget its own history, and in *Charivari* 'the "mask"', as Gruber puts it, 'is gradually allowed to slip' as the musical tapestry disintegrates. The somewhat bleak programme note adds: 'The uglier facts of history cannot



GRUBER FACTS

Born Vienna, January 3, 1943.

Musical roots His great-great-grandfather Franz Xaver Gruber wrote the carol 'Stille Nacht'.

Wiener Blut After singing in the Vienna Boys' Choir, Gruber studied at the Vienna Hochschule für Musik, and later played the double bass in the ORF Symphony Orchestra for several decades.

A Kurt Weill connection

Gruber got in touch with David Drew of Boosey & Hawkes after reading some programme notes of his for a Kurt Weill concert. He eventually signed with Boosey and Drew remained a key influence in his development.

On the podium Gruber has long been in demand as a conductor, and not just to perform his own works. He has worked closely with ensembles including Ensemble Modern and the BBC Philharmonic, and has recorded numerous CDs.

Gruber on *Frankenstein!!*

'Even howling plastic horses have their motivic/harmonic function.'

always be glossed over; and except perhaps for the tourist trade there's nothing to be gained from obsessively

harking back to the "good old days". Strauss's *Wiener Blut* waltz makes an appearance as well; there is something quite Mahlerian about the climax; and there are also some rather militaristic touches. Over the course of *Charivari's* 11 minutes, it's as if a hundred years of Viennese history is flashing past us, and as its mesmerising final chord ebbs away one wonders whether it was wrong to feel so entertained by the whole thing.

The spectre of past Viennas is an occasional presence in other works of Gruber's as well, notably his two violin concertos, which seem to take their cue from Berg. Gruber is sometimes said to represent a 'Third Viennese School', but that should not be taken as a disavowal of the legacy of the 'Second' one of Berg, Schoenberg and Webern. Yet while Berg's Violin Concerto quotes a Bach chorale, Gruber's first violin concerto, ... *Aus Schatten Duft gewebt* (1977-78, rev 1992), is a set of variations that ends by quoting a very different sort of theme: a popular-style love song that Gruber had written for his MOB art & tone ART group. Meanwhile, the second concerto, *Nebelsteinmusik* (1988), is built around a quotation from Berg's *Lyric Suite*, as well as paying tribute to Gruber's teacher Gottfried von Einem and the jazz music that so influenced him.

Gruber's numerous other concertos are an especially notable part of his catalogue. He has written two percussion

concertos (*Rough Music*, 1982-83, and *Into the Open ...*, 2010), a piano concerto (2014-16) for Emanuel Ax, and two trumpet concertos for Håkan Hardenberger (*Aerial*, 1998-99, and *Busking*, 2007) – the second of which is scored for the oddly apt ensemble of trumpet, accordion, banjo and strings, with those two unorthodox instruments intended to evoke the organ and harpsichord of the Baroque period. There is also the particularly fine Cello Concerto (1989) written for Yo-Yo Ma and recorded by Robert Cohen, which – similar to the violin concerto ... *Aus Schatten Duft gewebt* – is cast in a continuous movement that culminates in what the composer has called 'a small "Webernised" Pop-Song'.

All that said, if Gruber is known for one thing alone, it is the wickedly entertaining *Frankenstein!!* – and it's easy enough to see why it has become so beloved, although it would be a shame if it eclipsed Gruber's many other fascinating works. Yet, somewhat freakish though *Frankenstein!!* is with its kazoos and dancing 'mi ma monsterlets', it is not unrepresentative. Rather, it is simply a work in which Gruber himself, in his chansonnier guise, embodies the constant shifting of register that is the hallmark of his style. Is this spoken or sung? Highbrow or popular? Serious or comic? Similar questions are shot through much of his other music.

Look at the programme of a Vienna Boys' Choir concert these days and you might find yourself feeling similarly confused about tone: Elton John and Richard Rodgers cosy up next to Carl Orff and Johannes Brahms, alongside various Strausses. Yet this surreal sort of programming perhaps says something quite profound about the strangely – sometimes maddeningly – multifarious musical world we all inhabit. So, of course, do Gruber's witty, varied, restive compositions. Perhaps he has something in common with his old choir after all. **G**

A GRUBER PLAYLIST

Showcasing his compositional range since the 1960s



Busking. Three MOB Pieces

Håkan Hardenberger *tpt* with Claudia Buder *acco*

Mats Bergström *banj* Swedish CO / HK Gruber

BIS (11/12)

Gruber's frequent collaborator is the soloist in three works: the first is the 1999 arrangement of the early *Three MOB Pieces*, the second the 2007 concerto *Busking*. The third is by fellow MOB art & tone ART founder Kurt Schwertsik, whose caffeinated *Divertimento macchiato* provides useful context.



'Manhattan Broadcasts'

Robert Cohen *vc* Swedish Chamber Orchestra / HK Gruber

BIS (12/03)

This is the best indicator of Gruber's compositional range. The fascinating, serious-minded Cello Concerto (1989) precedes *Zeitfluren* (2001), whose eerie first half gives way to a jazzy second, before the light-as-air *Manhattan Broadcasts* (1962-64) completes the disc.



Frankenstein!! Charivari. Dancing in the Dark

BBC Philharmonic / HK Gruber

Chandos (5/07)

This recording of *Frankenstein!!* (1976-77) has much to commend it, but the pairing with the orchestral diptych *Dancing in the Dark* (2002) and *Charivari* (which is preceded by its inspiration, Johann Strauss's *Perpetuum mobile*), make this collection essential listening.

Vocal



Tim Ashley is enthusiastic about a debut disc from Marie Perbost:

'The emphasis she places on the texts serves her wonderfully well in the chansons and operetta extracts' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 103**



Alexandra Coghlan welcomes an Irish-themed album from Dublin:

'Whatever their director and voice coach are doing, every other choral director should be knocking down their door to discover' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 104**

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45

Carolyn Sampson *sop* **André Morsch** *bar*

Cappella Amsterdam; Orchestra of the Eighteenth Century / Daniel Reuss

Glossa © GCD921126 (70' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at De Doelen, Rotterdam, May 2018



De Doelen hall in Rotterdam may not boast the six-second echo of

Bremen Cathedral, birthplace of the *German Requiem*, or the cavernous acoustic of Antwerp's De Singel which hosted these forces in a fine *Missa solennis* (6/17), but its wooden walls enclose an ideally gentle, resonating space for Brahms's obsequy of consolation. Acoustic, engineering and direction all shepherd the piece to its resting place without recourse to lachrymose solemnity or iconoclastic tempo revisionism. Indeed, Daniel Reuss is slower than Klemperer in four of the seven movements, yet the pace never drags.

At the time of the performance he talked, as conductors now do, of returning to the Requiem its proper heritage in Schütz and Handel. Transparent choral and instrumental textures achieve this, but not at the expense of warmth (coppery horns), affection (Carolyn Sampson, who takes her first phrase in one breath at an ideally judged tempo) or for that matter high drama in the two baritone-led narrative panels of penitence and hard-won triumph: I especially appreciate the way that Reuss patiently builds the fugues rather than driving them unmercifully in the modern fashion. Pizzicatos accompany singers like pilgrims along the way, hastening their steps, while the organ offers support and warmth to vibrato-free strings. Rather than blandly mirroring the first movement, 'Selig sind die Toten' moves on with slight but perceptible urgency, sensitive to the excellent sopranos of Cappella Amsterdam and imparting a lovely, pastel-drawn glow to the

movement's windows of revelation: 'Aber, der Geist spricht'.

The corollary: some listeners will chafe at the softly rounded edges, others at a few momentary slips attendant upon a live recording, and at a rather strait-laced baritone. They may take their pick from Alsop (Naxos, 9/13), Paavo Järvi (Erato, 7/11) or, more controversially, Niquet (Evil Penguin, 11/15). Anyone who holds the *German Requiem* dear to their heart should find much here to treasure.

Peter Quantrill

Coates

Four Old English Songs. The Mill o' Dreams:

A Cycle of Four Little Songs. Always as I close my eyes. At Daybreak. Bird Songs at Eventide.

By the North Sea. Dreams of London. The Fairy Tales of Ireland. The Green Hills of Somerset.

Homeward to you. I heard you singing. I pitch my lonely caravan at night. Little Boy Blue. Our Little Home. Reuben Ranzo. Rise up and reach the stars. The Scent of Lilac. Sleepy lagoon.

Song of the Little Folk. Sea Rapture. Stars and a Crescent Moon. Tell me where is fancy bred

Kathryn Rudge *mez* **Christopher Glynn** *pf*

Somm Céleste © SOMMCD0192 (66' • DDD • T)



Eric Coates, the 'King of Light Music', is of course best known for his orchestral pieces.

His more than 130 published songs tend to be overlooked, belonging as they do to an English song tradition that, by and large, is completely ignored by today's recitalists. So full marks to Kathryn Rudge and Christopher Glynn for this, the most comprehensive collection of Coates songs ever presented on a single disc – 28 titles, including almost all the best-known ones.

Sadly, the results are not a total success. The ear quickly adjusts in the opening brief song ('Little Boy Blue', 1'39") to the empty studio acoustic and the balance between voice and piano, not dissimilar to that on a previous Coates song collection – Brian Rayner Cook and Raphael Terroni back in

1986 (ASV, 3/87 – nla): I prefer to hear voice and piano conjoined in the sound picture. Cook, however, does not have Rudge's noisy intakes of breath. And his diction is better.

It is unfortunate that her second song should be 'Sleepy lagoon', the gloopy 1940 vocal version approved by Coates of his famous 1930 orchestral hit. It is manifestly unsuited to Rudge's operatic delivery – you cannot hit the word 'lagoon' as hard as she does and hope to convey the sense of the lyric. Some of the other gentler songs come off well ('The Scent of Lilac', 'Always as I close my eyes') with elegant phrasing and a pleasing feel for period style. 'The Green Hills of Somerset', one of several songs Coates wrote with the prolific Fred E Weatherly, is sweetly yearning, though spoilt by the unnecessarily splashy final 't' of each 'Somerset' (Joan Hammond, in her evergreen recording, managed without). Again, 'Bird Songs at Eventide' and 'I hear you singing', two more once-popular Coates songs, are fine but compromised by Christopher Glynn's metronomic reaction to his task (listen to Edwin Schneider, accompanying John McCormack in 1927, taking the song to another level).

The rollicking 'Reuben Ranzo', another Weatherly lyric, is better suited to a male voice (Rayner Cook is tremendous) and Richard Edgar-Wilson with pianist Eugene Asti on his splendid disc of lesser-known Coates songs (Marco Polo, 4/96) makes you ask why the spine-tingling 'Rise up and reach the stars' is not heard in our concert halls more frequently. The Somm disc comes with a good English-only booklet (Jeremy Dibble) and all the lyrics.

Jeremy Nicholas

Elgar

Caractacus, Op 35

Elizabeth Llewellyn *sop* **Elgan Liŷr Thomas** *ten*

Roland Wood *bar* **Alastair Miles, Christopher**

Purves *basses* **Huddersfield Choral Society;**

Orchestra of Opera North / Martyn Brabbins

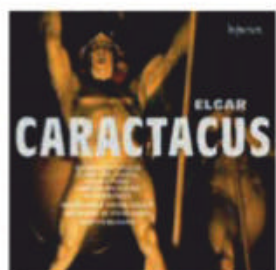
Hyperion © (two discs for the price of one)

CDA68254 (96' • DDD • T)





Dramatic scope: the Choir of Merton College and Oxford Contemporary Sinfonia give the first recording of Gabriel Jackson's *The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ*



Although the London performance of the *Enigma* Variations under Richter in 1899 is invariably cited as the composer's 'red letter' day, Elgar's cantata *Caractacus*, written for Leeds in 1898, was in many ways equally if not more important as the stylistic confluence of his mature voice (even if Ackworth's rather dated libretto occasionally sticks in the craw). A coming together of his Wagnerian enthusiasms, the work amply illustrates his fertile use of leitmotif technique (one that was already incipient in his earlier choral works, *The Black Knight*, *King Olaf* and *The Light of Life*). But, more significantly, it was only one conscious step for Elgar to translate his instinctive musical thought in instrumental terms into a fully fledged Wagnerian symphonic process in which the orchestra became the dominant vehicle. This is compellingly evident in *Caractacus*, in many ways a one-act nationalist opera, and points the way to those operas-manqués of *The Dream of Gerontius*, *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, which represent the pinnacle of his interpretation of the British oratorio paradigm.

Martyn Brabbins, a true specialist of late Victorian repertoire (as we know from his interpretations of Parry and Stanford), is very much alive to these aspects of the work (perhaps encouraged by his experience at ENO). He brings an electricity and Straussian *Schwung* to the orchestral sound throughout this recording, whether in the vibrant marches of scene 1 ('Watchmen, alert!'), the processional march of scene 4 (the best-known part of the cantata) or the delicious 'woodland interlude', a forerunner of 'Dorabella' in the *Enigma* Variations and the immutable miniatures of the two *Wand of Youth* Suites.

There are some fine performances here from the soloists. Roland Wood is very much up to the weighty role of Caractacus, especially in the big soliloquies of scene 1, scene 4 (the moving lament 'O my warriors') and the historically renowned eloquent address before Claudius and the Senate in scene 6. Christopher Purves's euphonious, rich bass tone is admirably suited to the well-meaning if deceitful Bard in scene 2 (at times thoroughly redolent of *Parsifal*) with its splendid march theme ('Go forth to conquer'), and Alastair Miles plays an authoritative Claudius in scene 6. Elizabeth Llewellyn lends some lyrical respite to much of the forceful rhetoric

of the work's warrior spirit, one abundantly supplied by Caractacus's impetuous son, Orbin, played by Elgan Llŷr Thomas. Both are also passionately equal to Elgar's enthralling love duet in scene 3, a section that avidly confirms the operatic character of this rich score. The well-prepared Huddersfield Choral Society, appropriately attuned to their role as *turba*, provide a range of sensitive light and shade, as well muscular tone, to the varying dramatic contexts, and a crisp counterpoint to the orchestra, with which they often participate as part of the larger instrumental canvas. This is particularly memorable in the opening chorus of scene 1 and the stirring music of the triumphal march in scene 6.

Jeremy Dibble

G Jackson

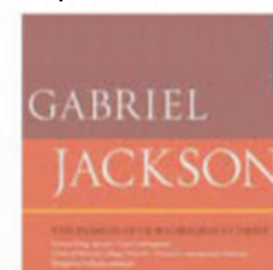
The Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ

Emma Tring *sop* Guy Cutting *ten*

Choir of Merton College, Oxford; Oxford

Contemporary Sinfonia / Benjamin Nicholas

Delphian © DCD34222 (69' • DDD • T/t)



Conceived to mark the 750th anniversary of Merton College, Oxford, in 2014, the

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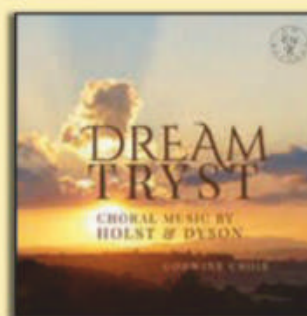


THE WANDERER

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DREAM TRYST

Choral Music by Holst and Dyson

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Merton Choirbook project set out to create 'the 21st century's finest single collection of new choral and organ music'. A glance down the resulting volume – anthems, hymns, psalms and antiphons by everyone from Harrison Birtwistle and Ēriks Ešenvalds to Kerry Andrew and Judith Weir – makes a strong case, and it's one only being reinforced as the works gradually make their way into the recording catalogue.

The centrepiece of the project is a 70-minute Passion setting by Gabriel Jackson. Recorded here for the first time by the Choir of Merton College and the Oxford Contemporary Sinfonia, it's a work closely bound up with the college's history and community, but one that gives every promise of a rich future life beyond both. Chaplain Simon Jones has collated texts not only from the four Gospels and the King James Bible (part of which was translated at Merton) but also from Mertonian poets TS Eliot, Edmund Blunden and Thomas Carew to create a devotional collage that follows in the Anglican tradition of Vaughan Williams, Howells and Benjamin Britten.

A 10-piece ensemble, dominated by the glitter of harp, percussion and high woodwind, gives the work its dramatic scope, by turns taut and lean and then thickly spread, rich with melodic embroidery. The arresting opening – a saxophone erupting suddenly out of low instrumental rumbling into an ecstatic, primal arabesque of sound, like a latter-day *Rite of Spring* – sets the tone for a work whose chant-inflected lines and modal tonality speak directly and unaffectedly.

Texture talks the loudest here, whether in the keening vocal flickers and ornaments that sob through melodies or the sudden light-dark shifts of orchestration. With no Evangelist figure, the Passion narrative passes more fluidly between two soloists (soprano Emma Tring and tenor Guy Cutting) and the main choral body. Storytelling is contemplative rather than slavishly dramatic – a meditation on action, rather than action itself.

Contrasts are telling, as the music moves from the lambent beauty of 'Anointing at Bethany' (soprano, violin, harp) to the disorientating horror of Gethsemane. It all adds up to an effective, emotionally charged contemporary Passion, though the Eliot-texted last movement feels uneasy. This is poetry too self-sufficient to be bent into a lyric, and fights back against the musical attempt to assume it into a triumphant closing apotheosis.

Alexandra Coghlan

Mozart · Haas

Haas Sieben Klangräume

Mozart Requiem, K626 (fragment)

Genia Kühmeier *sop* **Sarah Connolly** *contr*

Topi Lehtipuu *ten* **Alastair Miles** *bass*

Anton Holzapfel *org* **Salzburg Bach Choir;**

Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra / Ivor Bolton

Belvedere © 08047 (53' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Grosser Saal of the Salzburg Mozart Foundation, December 4, 2005



This is a valiant attempt at a worthwhile exercise that nevertheless

throws up one or two puzzling matters. The performance of the Requiem is not the 'traditional' version, as completed by Süssmayr and others shortly after Mozart's death; neither is it one of the modern completions that has proliferated over the past half a century. Instead it purports to offer the score as it lay at the foot of Mozart's deathbed on the night of December 5, 1791. Interspersed among the fragmentary movements of the Sequenz and Offertorium are seven *Klangräume* ('sound spaces') by Georg Friedrich Haas, composed in response to the extant, unfinished movements of the Requiem.

In terms of the Mozart, you hear the movements from the 'Dies irae' to the 'Hostias' in skeletal form, with the eight Mozartian bars of the 'Lacrymosa' left hanging in mid-air. You are left marvelling, on the one hand, that so much of the work was complete in Mozart's head, waiting to be written down. The continuity is all there, so far as the score exists; all that is missing is the colouring-in. Then you are struck by the fearsome task of completion that faced the 25-year-old Süssmayr early in 1792. The 'Dies irae' thins out as it goes along; the 'Tuba mirum' – following the trombone solo – exists largely as just vocal lines and bass. The re-entry of basset-horns for the 'Recordare' and 'Confutatis' comes as colouristic balm.

There are some oddities, though. Bolton presents the 'Kyrie' in its fully orchestrated form, although Mozart composed only the choral and continuo parts. The organist, too, far from merely providing discreet harmonic filling, sometimes inserts snippets remembered from the later, completed version: for example, at 'Statuens in parte dextra' in the 'Recordare'. If the aim was to demonstrate how much or how little was by Mozart, it defeats the point then to smuggle in bits of Süssmayr.

Haas's *Klangräume* adopt the choral and unusual instrumental forces of the Requiem

and offer commentaries on its fragments in a somewhat Ligetian style. There are clusters, slow falling *tutti* glissandos, speech and *Sprechstimme*, setting words from a 1791 letter appointing Mozart to the unpaid post of deputy Kapellmeister at St Stephen's Cathedral. A balance that favours instruments over choral voices works better here than in the Mozart; you will notice ideas from the corresponding movements of the Requiem being taken up and refracted through Haas's 21st-century prism in each *Klangraum*.

Another puzzle is why it took 13 years for the recording to see the light of day. Worthwhile for the Haas, for those attuned to his sound world. Another recording of the Requiem fragment (Naïve, 5/02) exists, *sans* Haas, and is now available in Universal's majestic 'Mozart 225' collection (10/16). **David Thresher**

Purcell

'The Cares of Lovers'

Bonduca, Z574 - O lead me to some peaceful

gloom. The fatal hour comes on apace, Z421.

From silent shades (Bess of Bedlam), Z370.

Ground, ZD222. A Ground in Gamut, Z645. Hears

not my Phillis how the birds (The Knotting

Song), Z371. If music be the food of love, Z379c.

The Indian Queen, Z630 - Dear pretty youth.

Music for a while, Z583. Now that the sun hath

veiled his light (An Evening Hymn), Z193.

O solitude, my sweetest choice, Z406.

Pausanias, Z585 - Sweeter than roses. The Rival

Sisters, Z609 - Celia has a thousand charms. She

loves and she confesses too, Z413. The Sicilian

Usurper, Z581 - Retir'd from any mortal's sight.

Tell me, some pitying angel (The Blessed Virgin's

Expostulation), Z196. Thou wakeful shepherd

that dost Israel keep (A Morning Hymn), Z198.

Timon of Athens, Z632 - The cares of lovers

Rowan Pierce *sop*

William Carter *lute/theorbo* **Richard Egarr** *hpd*

Linn © CKD592 (60' • DDD • T)



Currently a Harewood Artist at English National Opera, with a win at The Grange

Festival's inaugural International Singing Competition under her belt, the young British soprano Rowan Pierce's star is very much in the ascendant. A vivacious presence on stage, with a light, agile voice, Pierce should be a natural fit for the Purcell songs she records here in her solo debut, 'The Cares of Lovers'.

But while the recital is prettily and neatly sung, it feels pre-emptive. There's a sense of restriction – both in vocal tone and expressive inflection – that never quite

relaxes or releases, and while Pierce's feather-light instrument works well in an operatic ensemble cast, it doesn't yet have the range to carry a whole disc.

Coy flirtation and innocent or arch romantic yearnings ('She loves and she confesses too', 'Hears not my Phillis', 'Dear pretty youth') suits her best, but even here the soprano fails to capture the delicate humour of which Purcell is such a master. Listen to Anne Sofie von Otter's account of 'Dear pretty youth' (Archiv) and you're left in no doubt of the sexual suggestion barely concealed beneath the sweet surface. Here it could be sung by a nun.

The extended dramatic monologues – 'Tell me, some pitying angel' and 'From silent shades' – lack scope and emotional stake, too often showing the limits rather than the strengths of the voice. Realisations by Richard Egarr and William Carter are exemplary, however, and the two instrumental Grounds offer a chance to hear them in the spotlight.

There's nothing really wrong with this release but there's also no call to arms in these polite, well-drilled performances of core repertoire. Even within Purcell's output Pierce could have found many more interesting back streets to explore, as Anna Dennis recently demonstrated (Resonus, 3/19). As it is, in these familiar classics there's just too much competition for these accounts to make their case. **Alexandra Coghlan**

A Scarlatti

Amore, pace e providenza (Al fragor di lieta tromba). Diana, Amore, Venere (Bel piacere ch'è la caccia)

Anna Chierichetti, Rosita Frisani *sops*

Marco Lazzara *counterten* **Riccardo Ristori** *bass*

Ars Cantica Choir; Alessandro Stradella Consort / Estévan Velardi

Concerto Classics ⑤ ② CC2107 (94' • DDD • T/t)



Serenatas were nocturnal concert pieces akin to cantatas for special occasions

that could be performed in costume with a backdrop, but without acting or scene changes, and which sometimes took place outdoors depending on the season and the weather. Estévan Velardi and the Alessandro Stradella Consort present premiere recordings of two serenatas by Alessandro Scarlatti that were both composed for Naples after the composer was re-established as *maestro di cappella* at the royal chapel of the Habsburg viceroy.

Al fragor di lieta tromba (1711) is a quickly forgettable celebration of the name day of

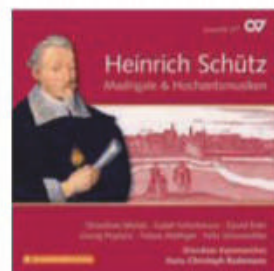
Emperor Charles VI, whose virtues are extolled by Love, Peace and Providence; the performance is patchy. The level of instrumental playing, singing and Velardi's pacing are all on much better form in the infinitely more engrossing *Bel piacere ch'è la caccia* (c1717-18). Crammed full of exceptionally creative music, it depicts the feisty huntress Diana (sung classily by Anna Chierichetti) boasting that she is immune to love, but then promptly falling prey to the arrows of Cupid (sung with suppleness by Rosita Frisani), instigated by Venus (the plummy countertenor Marco Lazzara). There are masterful arias featuring a variety of instrumental textures such as a pair of trumpets, oboes, cleverly varied string-writing and even one number featuring obbligato parts for two theorbos. The recording is dedicated fondly to the memory of the great Scarlatti scholar Roberto Pagano, whose extensive and authoritative essay is printed in the detailed booklet – although it is unhelpful that the English translations of the sung texts provided are not placed in parallel alongside the Italian. **David Vickers**

Schütz

'Madrigale & Hochzeitsmusiken'

Ach, wie soll ich doch in Freuden leben, SWV474. Die Erde trinkt für sich, SWV438. Freue dich des Weibes deiner Jugend, SWV453. Glück zu dem Helikon, SWV96. Haus und Güter erbet man von Eltern, SWV21. Ich beschwöre euch, ihr Töchter zu Jerusalem, SWV339. Itzt blicken durch des Himmels Saal, SWV460. Lässt Salomon sein Bette nicht umgeben, SWV452. Liebster, sagt in süßem Schmerzen, SWV441. Nachdem ich lag in meinem öden Bette, SWV451. Saget den Gästen, SWV459. Siehe, wie fein und lieblich ist's, SWV48. Stehe auf, meine Freundin, SWV498. Wie wenn der Adler sich aus seiner Klippe schwingt, SWV434. Wohl dem, der ein tugendsam Weib hat, SWV20

Dorothee Mields, Isabel Schickeltanz *sops* **David Erler** *counterten* **Tobias Mäthger, Georg Poplutz** *tens* **Felix Schwandtke** *bass* **Dresden Chamber Choir; ensemble / Hans-Christoph Rademann**
Carus ⑤ CARUS83 277 (79' • DDD • T/t)



Now on its 19th volume and approaching completion, Carus's

complete Schütz cycle – the first on record – has proved itself a consistently superb guide to the composer's music. But while the project is giving us fine new accounts of the major works, it is at its most interesting when it strays off the main musical path. Schütz's three Passions, his

Christmas and Resurrection stories and *Seven Last Words* have been thoroughly (if not extensively) covered on disc. But the same is scarcely true of the smaller vocal works, two of which receive their premiere recordings here.

The more familiar Op 1 Italian madrigals give a taste of a composer alive to musical colour and drama, playful as well as sophisticated. This is the Schütz we meet again here in this assortment of early madrigals, cantatas and wedding songs, both sacred and secular. The mood is lively, ranging from the open irreverence of the drinking song *Die Erde trinkt für sich* to settings of the Song of Songs – urgently sensual – and dignified choral rejoicing of *Siehe, wie fein und lieblich ist's*.

The two premieres are both appealing, if minor works. The short wedding song *Saget den Gästen* anchors its dancing strings with a fruity dulcian (Clemens Schlemmer), while *Ach, wie soll ich doch in Freuden leben* is a statelier affair painted in the darker shades of male voices. It's the two Song of Songs settings – *Liebster, sagt in süßem Schmerzen* and *Stehe auf, meine Freundin* – that really capture the ear here. The latter, with its insistent refrain, is a graceful motet for double choir, while the former's delicate chromatic touches capture the pleasure-pain of desire.

As Fabrice Fitch has found earlier in the cycle, though the Dresdner Kammerchor under Hans-Christoph Rademann are crisp and clean, it's the soloists that really elevate these performances. The team is now well established and anyone following the series will be delighted to see the return of familiar faces, including the sopranos Dorothee Mields and Isabel Schickeltanz and the soft-grained countertenor David Erler.

Once again with this series the comparison is with Manfred Cordes and Weser-Renaissance Bremen (CPO, 2001), and once again Rademann and his musicians just pull ahead, thanks to their warmer acoustic and the quality of the solo voices. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Taverner

Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas. Audivi vocem.

Ave Maria. Dum transisset sabbatum.

Gaude plurimum. Leroy Kyrie

Contrapunctus; Choir of The Queen's

College, Oxford / Owen Rees

Signum ⑤ SIGCD570 (76' • DDD • T/t)



Recordings of the *Missa Gloria tibi Trinitas* are hardly lacking, and the *Leroy Kyrie* featured on

that first Tallis Scholars recording all those years ago. In fact, multiple recordings exist for most of these pieces. So I should first say that Contrapunctus and the Choir of The Queen's College, Oxford, fully meet the challenge they set themselves; in fact I cannot remember hearing either in better voice.

They open with *Gaude plurimum*, in which the soloists of Contrapunctus sound especially well. Though not Taverner's most disciplined antiphon, it comes across very effectively; the first entry of the full choir in the second half is very striking. Contrapunctus are on their own in the *Leroy Kyrie*, perhaps the disc's most successful item, and a fitting aperitif to the Mass. Their chosen pitch-standard allows the trebles to shape the lines more purposefully than those of The Tallis Scholars (Gimell), both of which pitch it around a minor third higher. Owen Rees's view of the work is somewhat more leisurely than either of them, and considerably more so than Andrew Parrott's, and yet it never drags; what one loses in thrills one recoups in appreciating the details. For textural clarity the Tallis and Taverner Choir (Warner) remain unequalled, but the essential distinction between soloists in reduced sections and the full ensemble brings an undeniable grandeur (The Tallis Scholars always have more than one voice on a part). The shorter pieces that round off the recital are also well handled, *Audivi vocem* especially. In a final comparison, it is hard to argue with the incisiveness and cogency of the Taverner Choir's (still, maddeningly, nla), but this more relaxed view has much to recommend it. **Fabrice Fitch**

Todd

Jazz Missa brevis. Passion Music.

God so loved the world. I am changed.

Tantum ergo. What sweeter music

Shaneeka Simon *voc* John Turville *pf* St Martin's

Voices; Will Todd Ensemble / Will Todd

Signum © SIGCD563 (78' • DDD • T/t)



The two major works on this generously filled disc are further examples of the blending of jazz and choral music exemplified in Will Todd's groundbreaking *Mass in Blue* of 2003 (recorded by the Vasari Singers – Signum, A/06). *Passion Music* (2018) consists of nine movements, drawing on a wide range of texts, including Mrs Alexander's classic 'There is a green hill far away', St John's Gospel, the Latin

Stabat mater and an American spiritual. Wrapped in a highly sophisticated, 'low-down', piano-led, post-*Godspell* garb, there is superb support from a seven-piece combo who accompany the 18 members of St Martin's Voices. Their perfect tonal blend (albeit with much octave doubling and homophonic chording) makes a startling foil to the ultra-melismatic, quasi-charismatic, gospel-flavoured contributions from the vocal soloist Shaneeka Simon. Although the faster movements (such as 'A new commandment') rock along with tremendous rhythmic verve, it is the unaccompanied moments of relative stillness which are especially affecting, for example 'My love has died for me'.

Todd himself takes over the pianist's stool from the excellent John Turville for the *Jazz Missa brevis*, providing plenty of funky McCoy Tyner-like thumbprints, such as in the *Benedictus* which – minus its texts – would happily grace any 1970s US cop show. The soothing and gentle closing bars of the *Agnus Dei* lead beautifully into a quartet of recent *a cappella* settings which make up the rest of the disc. *Tantum ergo* has a beguiling sweetness, as does *What sweeter music* of 2015, with its subtle Scottish inflections, simpler *divisi* textures, 'scrunchy' chords and aching unresolved suspensions. Possibly the finest track of all is *I am changed* (2016), a delicious setting of the composer's own 'born again' text.

A stimulating release, beautifully recorded and produced. **Malcolm Riley**

'The Coronation of King George II'

Music by Blow, Child, Farmer, Gibbons, Handel, Purcell and Tallis

The King's Consort / Robert King

Chateau de Versailles Spectacles © DVD CVS005 (98' • PAL • 16:9 • DD5.1 & stereo • O)

Video director Julien Condemine

Recorded live, January 17, 2018



Robert King's reconstruction of the musical parts of the coronation of King George II (Hyperion, 12/01) was a classic recording product of the early music movement. Like Andrew Parrott's 'Florentine Intermedii' of 1986, Paul McCreesh's 'Venetian Coronation' of 1989 and Robert Hollingworth's '1612 Italian Vespers' of 2012, it brought together the talents of a generation of British period singers and instrumentalists in an intelligently researched and plausible echo of a historical moment in which music

played an important part. In this case the historical moment introduced to the world Handel's four Coronation Anthems, *Zadok the Priest* among them, which only added to the allure, and King's project went on to enjoy a healthy existence as a spectacular concert programme for a variety of large and imposing venues. This film records its visit to the Royal Chapel at Versailles in January 2018.

King has not changed the order of service that filled two CDs on that first recording, which, as he pointed out, was speculative inasmuch as there is no clear and complete record of what pieces were performed that day in Westminster Abbey in 1727. All we know of for sure are the Handel anthems plus William Child's *O Lord, grant the King a long life* and one or other of Orlando Gibbons's two *Te Deums*. King programmes the rest on the assumption that the Abbey raided its archive for content from previous coronations, and happily fishes out superb music by Purcell (*I was glad*) and Blow (*Behold, O God our defender* and the majestic *God spake sometime in visions*), plus some functional pieces by Tallis and John Farmer. Trumpet fanfares, drum processions and some lusty shouting complete the picture. The result, rather as with royal pageants today, seems consciously to set the old alongside the new, as the compact and sinewy 17th-century Englishness of Gibbons, Purcell and Blow contrasts with the more continental, suave, even dancelike manner of Handel.

Not surprisingly, the switch from audio to film has pluses and minuses. If you were expecting a visual treat to match the occasion you will be disappointed, for despite all the Chapelle's gilt and marble this is a 'normal' concert, and filmed as such, the focus being very much on its 21st-century performers. There is even applause and bowing before what was clearly an interval. Yet while the CD gave you a better chance to visualise the ermine and soaring stones of the Abbey, there is a flow to the concert that gives it more of the sense of an actual happening. And it is certainly fun to see the orchestra stand and join in the singing of Farmer's hymn *Come Holy Ghost* (some of them authentically head-in-copy), and a lady in the audience mouthing along to the words 'O Lamb of God' in Tallis's *O God, the Father of Heaven*.

Though the CD obviously allowed more care to be taken over the finer details of recording and performance, the singing and playing here are of predictable high quality. A college or cathedral choir might have set a more atmospheric tone but the singing of The King's Consort's adult professionals is excellent, and in itself

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deeply coloured by the Anglican tradition, as their expert accounts of the earlier pieces show. I suspect the discs will remain the more nourishing version in the long run but this is a nice enough alternative. Boo to the film-makers, though, for running a part-reprise of *Zadok* over the final titles.

Lindsay Kemp

'Desires'

'A Song of Songs Collection'

J Barber Sicut lilium **Brumel** Sicut lilium inter spinas **Ceballos** Hortus conclusus **Clemens non Papa** Ego flos campi **Dove** Vadam et circuibo civitatem **Esquivel** Surge propera amica mea **Gombert** Quam pulchra es **Grier** Dilectus meus mihi **G Jackson** I am the Rose of Sharon **Palestrina** Duo ubera tua **Plainchant** Tota pulchra es **Victoria** Vadam et circuibo civitatem **Vivanco** Veni, dilecte mi **R White** Tota pulchra es **ORA Singers / Suzi Digby**

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 5316 (71' • DDD • T/t)



Founded just three years ago, Suzi Digby's ORA Singers have already got six

recordings under their belt and established a clear musical signature – both in the pillowy, smudgy depth of their choral blend and in programming that combines Renaissance polyphony with contemporary works, often newly commissioned by the group themselves. 'Desires', the group's newest release, doesn't deviate from the successful model, taking the Song of Songs as the guiding thread through works by Victoria, White, Vivanco and Jonathan Dove, Gabriel Jackson and Francis Grier.

There's something about the heady, sensuous verses of the Song of Songs that sets composers dreaming in cloudy chord clusters, drifting around in suggestively interwoven lines and long, curving arcs of plainchant. The cooler, more sober beauty of Rodrigo de Ceballos's *Hortus conclusus* offers a welcome contrast, as does the full-bodied magnificence of Victoria's *Vadam et circuibo*, both showing off the ensemble's fine basses and glowing, unforced choral richness.

But the same texts that draw such gorgeous indecency from composers seem to have drawn a little too much expression from the choir. There's an uncharacteristic grip to the soprano sound, which often sounds pushed and less unanimous than we've come to expect, and the exposed solo lines of the Jackson expose some issues of tonal control. Clemens non Papa's breathtaking *Ego flos campi* is undeniably lovely here but it is worked a little hard

from the start, lacking that sense of fragile blooming that can be so effective. Robert White's *Tota pulchra es* is a similar story.

The contemporary works are all cut from similar harmonic cloth. Welcome little thorns of astringency temper the harmonic roses of Grier's highly perfumed *Dilectus meus mihi*, while Dove's female-voice-dominated *Vadam et circuibo* is all sonic sensuality and striking effects. Both John Barber's *Sicut lilium* and Gabriel Jackson's *I am the Rose of Sharon* look back to chant, but through gauzy, gilded cloths. It's all very generous, very gorgeous and leaves you desperate for a stern bit of counterpoint. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'Ibn Battuta'

'The Traveler of Islam, 1304-1377'

Hespèrion XXI / Jordi Savall

Alia Vox © ② AVSA9930 (147' • DDD/DSD • T/t)
Recorded live at the Emirates Palace-Auditorium, Abu Dhabi, November 20, 2014; Philharmonie, Paris, November 4, 2016



'Travel first leaves you voiceless, before it turns you into a storyteller',

according to Shams ad-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Muhammed ibn Ibrahim ibn Yussuf al-Lawati at-Tanji, the 14th century traveller and *qadi* (judge) known as Ibn Battuta ('Son of the Little Duck'). His travels are captured in the famous *rihla* (travel narrative) he dictated to Ibn Juzayy al-Kalbi in the early 1350s. This double album with accompanying book spans episodes from this *rihla* over the course of two live concerts – 1304-35, recorded in 2014 in Abu Dhabi with English narration, and 1335-77, recorded in 2016 in Paris with French narration – and was inspired by a new translation: *Travels of Ibn Battuta* by Margarida Castells and Manuel Forcano (2005).

Like Ibn Battuta's *rihla*, Jordi Savall's musical journey offers a voyage through a somewhat idealised Orient, one held to be the cradle of knowledge, culture and religion in the 14th century. To early music specialists with a Western gaze, this is an era normally dominated by the French poet and composer Machaut; but Ibn Battuta had a different gaze, one turned towards 'the orbit of Muslim culture and religion', as Castells and Forcano explain. Therefore Savall creates a musical quilt spanning Tangier to China, calling on oral and improvisatory traditions with appropriate historical lineage. If the *rihla* was 'a showcase for the world in all its

complexity', then Savall's programme supplies a fitting musical counterpart.

Consider the opening sequence: the narration announces Ibn Battuta's birth in Tangier accompanied by Driss El Maloumi's oud improvisation. Next Ahmed Al Saabri sings *Bismillah ir-Rahman*. More narration, accompanied by the Madagascan valiha virtuoso Rajery, describes the Muslim empire of Mali before both oud and valiha join for a lively instrumental piece, *Kouroukanfouga*. Savall then plays *Lamento di Tristano* on the rebec, marking the death of Marco Polo in 1324, before voyaging out through the port of Venice and eastwards for Katerina Papadopoulou's haunting *Greek Lament*. The next sequence follows Ibn Battuta through North Africa and Damascus as he journeyed towards Mecca. At each turn Savall evokes the atmosphere of a time with results more cinematographic than drily historical. Such a diverse programme and impressive cast of musicians will surely inspire every listener with a sense of wanderlust. Yet it is perhaps the subtext of this album – travelling through the world before modern borders – which is the most poignant part of Savall's message for us today. **Edward Breen**

'Une jeunesse à Paris'

Debussy Ariettes oubliées – No 1, C'est l'extase langoureuse; No 2, Il pleure dans mon coeur.

L'âme évaporée et souffrante **Deletrre** Mon rendez-vous **Dihau** La Tour Eiffel **Hahn** Une revue – La dernière valse **Hervé** La cosaque – Couplets du coiffeur. La femme à papa – Rondeau de la pensionnaire^a. Le voyage en Amérique – Rondeau du mollet^a **Kosma** Le cauchemar du chauffeur du taxi **Lecocq** Les cents vierges – Grand valse^a **Message** L'amour masqué – J'ai deux amants **Offenbach** La Périchole – Ah! Quel dîner je viens de faire^a

Poulenc Banalités. Les chemins de l'amour **Serpette** Le petit chaperon rouge – Duo des bijoux^b **Weill** La complainte de la Seine

Marie Perbost sop **Joséphine Ambroselli** pf with ^b**Paco Garcia** ten ^{ab}**Frivolités Parisiennes**

Harmonia Mundi © HMN91 6112 (65' • DDD • T)



Marie Perbost takes her own Parisian upbringing as the starting point for

her debut album in Harmonia Mundi's 'harmonia nova' series. When she was young, she tells us in a booklet note, her father installed in her a love of cabaret and the chanson tradition embodied by Jacques Brel and Marie Laforêt. She became familiar with the world of opera, both

on and off stage, meanwhile, through her mother, who sang in the chorus at the Opéra Bastille. The programme for her recital, 'a reflection on these two influences', as she describes it, juxtaposes mélodies with chansons and numbers from 19th-century operettas, familiar or otherwise.

Tellingly, she describes herself as being as much an actress as a singer. Her voice itself is sweet in tone, with an appealing gleam in its upper registers, but it's the emphasis she places on the texts that actually makes her stand out. It serves her wonderfully well when it comes to the nuances and double entendres of the chansons and operetta extracts, where she sounds impudently suggestive in numbers by Hervé, sails through Désiré Dihau's filthy 'La Tour Eiffel' with monumental indecency and gets the bittersweet mood of Hahn's 'La dernière valse' absolutely right. She's joined by the handsome-sounding tenor Paco Garcia, meanwhile, for a gloriously witty performance, the disc's high point, of the 'Duo des bijoux' from Gaston Serpette's *Le petit chaperon rouge*, a gem of a number that affectionately parodies the Jewel Song from Gounod's *Faust*.

The same intelligence and spirit are very much at work in the mélodies. Poulenc's *Banalités* are all barbed wit until bitterness sets in with the final, regretful 'Sanglots', and Debussy's 'C'est l'extase' really sounds 'langoureuse' as the vocal line hovers and twists and turns. She's a bit detached, though, in Weill's 'La complainte de la Seine' when placed beside Teresa Stratas or indeed the chanteuse Lys Gauty, for whom it was written. Pianist Joséphine Ambroselli, meanwhile, plays with great finesse across the disc's unusually wide range of styles. I would have preferred a larger ensemble for the operetta numbers than five instrumentalists – string quartet and clarinet – from Frivolités Parisiennes, though their contribution is unquestionably stylish. It's a fine recital, though, and a most impressive debut: one hopes to hear more of her, in French operetta above all.

Tim Ashley

'Live from the Forbidden City'

Liu Enchanted Night Orff *Carmina Burana*^a

Traditional Jasmine Flower^b

Blu-ray only: Rachmaninov Piano Concerto

No 2, Op 18^c Richter November^d

^aAida Garifullina sop ^aToby Spence ten ^aLudovic Tézier bar ^dMari Samuelsen vn ^cDaniil Trifonov pf

^{ab}Shanghai Spring Children's Choir; ^aVienna Singakademie; Shanghai Symphony Orchestra / Long Yu

DG ④ 483 6594GH; ④ DVD 073 5613GH;

④ Blu-ray 073 5614GH (68 • DDD • 128' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, October 10, 2018



DG celebrates its 120th anniversary by signing another ensemble and conductor from the East who have been developing increasing links with Western music. On this evidence the Shanghai-ers are a bright and bushy-tailed orchestra. Their evident commitment and growing sense of style in another culture's music are heightened by some evidently distinguished orchestral principals who catch the ear here, especially the first flute and bassoon.

The DVD/Blu-ray release has the substantial bonuses of Daniil Trifonov playing the Rachmaninov and Mari Samuelsen in Max Richter's *November*. It also contains brief interviews with four of the soloists. The recording on the DVD in particular – and obviously the Forbidden City's acoustic plays a part here – balances Long Yu's players and the chorus in the Orff a little more backwardly than we are accustomed to hearing in both the longer items (this seems less noticeable on the CD). And yet this combines well with Yu's cool and unexaggerated approach to both pieces, the orchestra not grandstanding their solo work in accompanying the *Carmina Burana* and the Rachmaninov. As does a string sound less rich than we are used to in the West. But there is no lack of either warmth or clarity in the recording (especially on the CD) and a creditable space around the vocal solos. And it's no harm at all to hear these chestnuts of the repertoire with a lack of attention-grabbing Hollywood Bowl glitz and swagger.

The performances reach out to embrace what was evidently a cold night in the dominantly exotic splendour of the Forbidden City. It's perhaps a pity that the two Chinese works were not more substantial and serve only as pretty greeting and farewell. *November*, a most *Four Seasons*-like atmospheric exercise, may be the only contemporary Western work here but is an apt choice acoustically and colour-wise within the remainder of the programme. Samuelsen makes a powerful impression with her far from easy part.

Trifonov contributes a second Rachmaninov Two to DG, following his studio success last year with the Philadelphia Orchestra (11/18). In keeping with the mood of this Chinese concert and its orchestra and conductor, this new

reading is no splash-and-dash exhibition but rather (despite the wide-open space of the venue) a considered, large-scale chamber reading of subtle colours.

The video director gives the pianist a lot of attention, viewing much of the performance from a kind of squat by his keyboard, catching Trifonov's clear judgements on his own work in his facial expressions.

Carmina Burana: don't be put off by its seeming laid-backness. This aspect of Yu's interpretation serves to heighten the folk aspects of the work, too often submerged in a kind of aggressive concert-hall banter. Soloists and choir (both Vienna imports and Shanghai children) are uniformly excellent, Tézier especially being subtle, hypnotic and genuinely witty as opposed to crude *buffo*. The performance is well worth the attention of a more focused hearing on CD although, as the tenor Toby Spence suggests in interview, the Forbidden City proves a curiously apt setting for the work. Recommended for both the music-making and the occasion. **Mike Ashman**

'Perpetual Twilight'

Antognini Aimhirgin Burns My love is like a red, red rose (arr Ešenvalds) Desmond Oxen of the Sun Earley Body of the Moon Mawby Bright Cap and Streamers Mawby/Earley Strings in the Earth and Air Paulberg A Star Stephens At that hour when all things have repose Traditional Bó na Leathadhairce. Danny Boy. Dúlamán (all arr Earley). The Maid of Culmore (arr Kevin Whymys). Wild Mountain Thyme (arr Eoin Conway) Whelan Elegy
The Choral Scholars of University College Dublin / Desmond Earley
Signum ④ SIGCD558 (66' • DDD • T/T)



The first thing that strikes you about 'Perpetual Twilight' is the sheer number

and quality of young tenors. Soloist after soloist – each easy and unforced, light and agile – gives the sopranos a run for their money, righting a balance that too often sees the women outclassing the men by some distance in even the very best mixed-voice university ensembles. Whatever artistic director Desmond Earley and voice coach Síle McCarthy-Cannon are doing with The Choral Scholars of University College Dublin, it's something every other choral director should be knocking down their door to discover.

Perhaps it's the repertoire. Earley – a composer as well as a conductor – is a passionate champion of traditional Irish



An actress as much as a singer: Marie Perbost shines in a mixed Parisian programme of mélodies, chansons and numbers from 19th-century operettas

music and the works here combine folk songs with newly commissioned pieces that hark back, many setting Irish authors including James Joyce and Frank McGuinness. The style throughout is chorally classical but with a freedom to the solo singing that's a bit folk and a bit singer-songwriter – perfect for voices still under construction. You can hear the legacy of Michael McGlynn and Anúna in the cloudy blend, though these younger singers lack the latter's gutsy power at full spate.

Tenor Ciaran O'Donovan and Conor Lyons on bodhrán lead dancing folk songs 'Dúlamán' and 'Bó na Leathadhairce', both discreetly arranged by Earley himself. These, along with Ēriks Ešēnvalds's rather more interventionist 'My love is like a red, red rose' are the pick of the traditional music, while of the new works it's Bill Whelan's 'Elegy', its poignant subject matter lightly worn and text always to the fore, that finds something substantial to say. Two Joyce settings by Colin Mawby are slight but perfectly formed.

Produced by Nigel Short, this whole project exudes quality, from the choral texture down to the array of fine instrumentalists. Caught somewhere between spotlight and Celtic twilight, it's a strong follow-up to the group's 2015 debut, 'Invisible Stars'. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'Si vous vouliez un jour ...'

'Airs sérieux et à boire, Vol 2'

M-A Charpentier Amor vince ogni cosa, H492.

Petite pastorale, Églogue de Bergers, H479.

Tristes déserts, sombre retraite, H469 **Lambert**

Amour, je me suis plaint cent fois. J'aimerais mieux souffrir la mort. Laissez-moi soupirer importune raison. Sans murmurer. Vos mépris chaque jour me causent mille alarmes. Vos yeux adorables. Vous avez trop d'appas **Le Camus** Ah, que vous êtes heureux!. Laissez durer la nuit, impatiente Aurore **Moulinié** Amis, enivrons-nous du vin d'Espagne en France. Enfin la beauté que j'adore. Guillot est mon ami

Les Arts Florissants / William Christie

Harmonia Mundi © HAF890 5306 (74) • DDD • T/t

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Paris, April 2016



Note that the simple, elegant *air de cour* would eventually form part of the basis for

French Baroque opera. And that the first work on this second volume of *airs de cour* from Les Art Florissants, Marc-Antoine Charpentier's 1676 *Petite pastorale, Églogue de Bergers*, largely comprises diverse pre-existing material from the composer's oeuvre, woven together to form a new whole. You'll then understand how one could see William Christie's conceit of a

troupe rehearsing Charpentier's Italianate Pastoraletta as a delicious semi-staged *pasticcio*, the interspersed *airs de cour* of Étienne Moulinié, Michel Lambert and Sébastien Le Camus representing the players' interpersonal intrigues.

This follows the pattern set by the first volume. That programme was built around the story of a marriage. This time the theme is Virgil's 'omnia vincit amor', or, as Charpentier's Pastoraletta has it, 'Amor vince ogni cosa': love conquers all. There are, though, plenty of complaints and prognostications along the way, as nymphs and shepherds variously bewail and celebrate their situations in a mythical sylvan landscape.

In Lambert's gorgeous *Amour, je me suis plaint cent fois* ('Love, I complained a hundred times'), an instrumental introduction gives way to ensemble-singing of great expressive refinement. Elsewhere, solo songs such as Le Camus's *Ah, que vous êtes heureux* ('Oh, how happy you seem') serve as delicate foils to the emotional upheavals of the main action.

Throughout, the young instrumentalists and vocalists alike – and it helps that this is a live recording – respond to Christie's direction from the harpsichord with freedom and fluency. The expressive ornamentation is particularly fine.

William Yeoman

WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month, **David Threasher**'s point of departure is ...

Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* (1736)

Pergolesi was only 26 when, during his final illness, he composed his setting of the medieval *Stabat mater* poem. Commissioned by the same Neapolitan confraternity that had ordered Alessandro Scarlatti's setting little more than a decade earlier, it is austere scored for strings and a pair of high voices that wind ecstatically around each other in the influential opening movement before embarking on a sequence of mournful duets and solos (Emma Kirkby and James Bowman on Christopher Hogwood's classic 1990 recording are near-ideal). As well as hymning the sorrowful Virgin, it proved to be Pergolesi's own Requiem: he died almost as soon as he had completed it.

● Emma Kirkby *sop* James Bowman *countertenor*
Academy of Ancient Music / Christopher Hogwood (Decca, 2/90)

1 More Pergolesi

Pergolesi *La serva padrona* (1733) Some thought Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* too operatic – too similar to the language of this

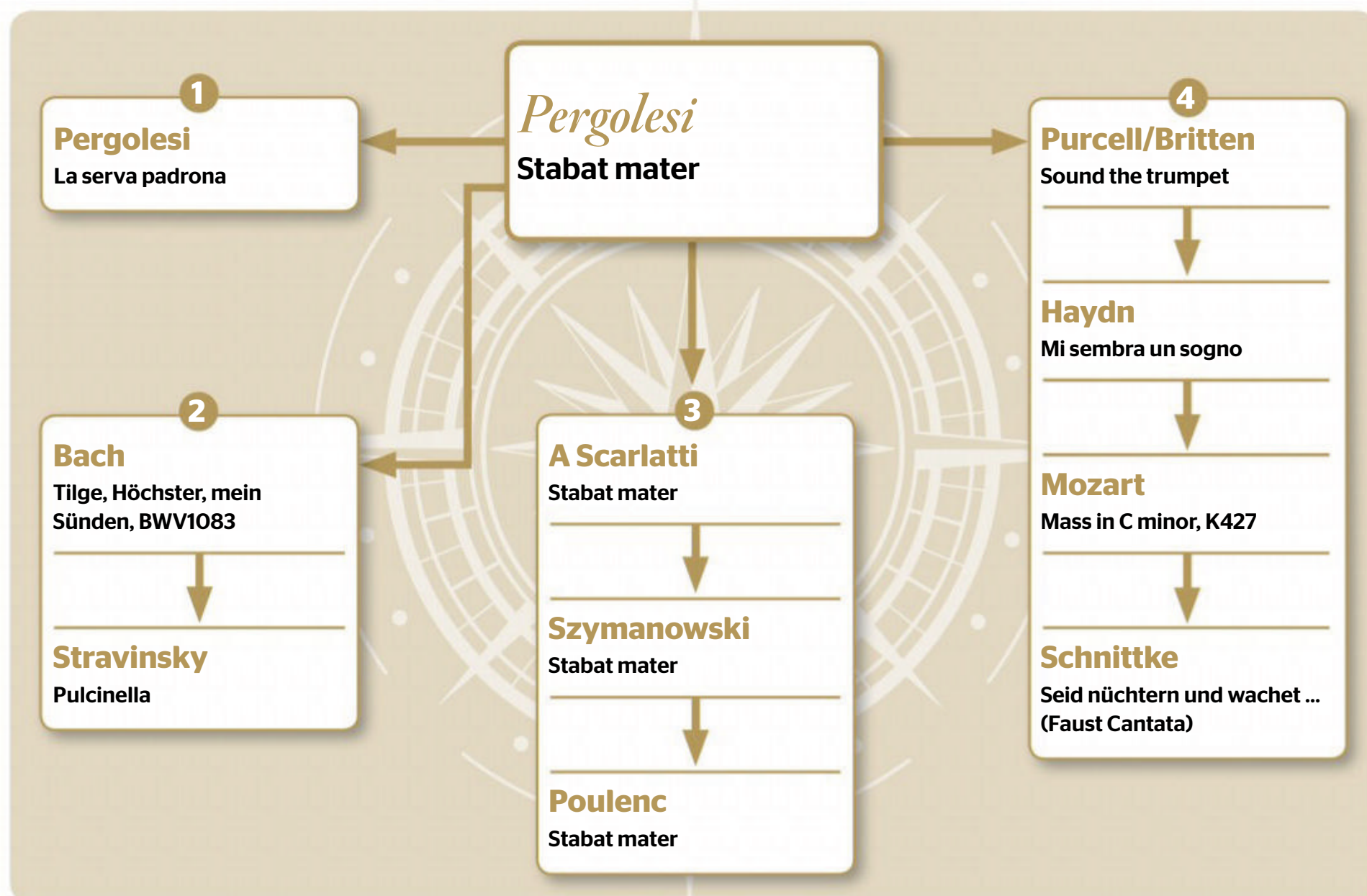
earlier intermezzo. *La serva padrona* ('The servant turned mistress') was just as influential, bridging the gap between the Baroque and Classical styles and setting the *buffa* template for years to come – to the extent that its fame has far outlasted that of the opera into which it was an insertion, *Il prigioniero superbo* ('The proud prisoner').

● Siegmund Nimsgern *bass-bar* Maddalena Bonifaccio *sop*
Collegium Aureum / Franzjosef Maier (DHM, 3/80)

2 More Pergolesi ... almost

Bach *Tilge, Höchster, mein Sünden, BWV1083* (c1745-47)

The *Stabat mater* by Pergolesi soon became famous all over Europe and was adapted to local conditions by a range of musicians. Even before it had been published, Bach created a new version by replacing the perfumed Catholic text with the far more Protestant Psalm 51 (the *Miserere*, 'Cancel, Highest, my sins') and beefing up the orchestration.



● Karina Gauvin *sop* Daniel Taylor *countertenor*
Violons du Roy / Bernard Labadie (Atma Classique, A/05)

Stravinsky Pulcinella (1920) For years most people's awareness of Pergolesi was via Stravinsky's *commedia dell'arte* ballet *Pulcinella*. Of course, 18th-century scholarship wasn't then what it is now, and many of the pieces Stravinsky orchestrated here in his inimitable way transpired to be by any number of other composers. Despite Stravinsky's initial misgivings about delving into this forgotten music (he didn't like what little Pergolesi he knew, namely the *Stabat mater*), *Pulcinella* nevertheless proved to be the work that launched his neoclassical period.

● Teresa Berganza *sop* Ryland Davies *ten* John Shirley-Quirk *bass*
London Symphony Orchestra / Claudio Abbado (DG, 6/79)

3 *More Stabat maters*

A Scarlatti Stabat mater (1724) While Pergolesi's *Stabat mater* looked forward in its style, the piece it replaced was considered rather whiskery by the confraternity almost as soon as it was completed. Unfairly, perhaps – for Scarlatti's setting is a richly chromatic and stylistically varied work, even if it doesn't breathe quite the same theatrical air as the younger man's effort. Once again, it's set for two high voices with the simple accompaniment of strings.

● Gemma Bertagnolli *sop* Sara Mingardo *contr*
Concerto Italiano / Rinaldo Alessandrini (Naïve, 4/99)

Szymanowski Stabat mater (1926) The medieval sequence continued to exert an influence on composers during the 18th and 19th centuries. Settings during the 20th century were often the result of inner compunction rather than external commission. For something unique, try Szymanowski's intensely moving setting, for which he uses not the standard Latin text but Józef Jankowski's Polish translation. It occupies a sound world similar to that of the opera *King Roger*, composed around the same time, deploying a large orchestra, ripe harmonies and an almost pagan approach to folk influences. There are three soloists this time, and a full choir.

● Iwona Hossa *sop* Ewa Marciniak *contr* Jarosław Bręk *bar*
Warsaw Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Antoni Wit (Naxos, A/08)

Poulenc Stabat mater (1950) Composed following the death of his friend the painter Christian Bérard, Poulenc's *Stabat mater* is a product of his late rediscovery of his Catholic faith. Nevertheless, both sides of his character – 'half monk, half rascal', as he was described – come to the fore. Sumptuous choral passages alternate with dramatic interjections such as 'Quis est homo' or 'Fac ut portem', with a solo soprano glinting through three of the movements. Just as nobody but Szymanowski could have composed his version of the *Stabat mater*, nobody but Poulenc could have come up with this wondrous confection, pious and naughty by turns.

● Janice Watson *sop* BBC Singers; BBC Philharmonic /
Yan Pascal Tortelier (Chandos, 8/95)

4 *Duelling high voices*

Purcell/Britten Sound the trumpet (1694/1940s) It's the two high voices (perhaps two women, perhaps soprano and countertenor) wrapping themselves around each other that makes the Pergolesi so sensual. Purcell's ode for Queen Mary's birthday, *Come, ye sons of art, away*, Z323, includes among its many highlights this infectious duet, in which two countertenors come together to 'make the list'ning shores resound'. If a pair of male altos and a Baroque band isn't camp enough for you, do seek out Britten's 'realisation', with Felicity Lott and Ann Murray channelling their



Mary standing beneath the Cross in Matthias Grunewald's Isenheim Altarpiece

inner 'sprightly hautboy', with Graham Johnson tinkling along gloriously (and anachronistically) on the piano.

● Felicity Lott *sop* Ann Murray *mez* Graham Johnson *pf* (Warner, 7/92)

Haydn Mi sembra un sogno (1775) Here, it's not two but three women's voices intertwining ecstatically. Haydn's Turkish opera *L'incontro improvviso* is all but forgotten today, which means audiences never get to hear this terzetto to the ear-tweaking accompaniment of strings, cors anglais and horns. It's hard not to imagine that Mozart simply must have had this trio in his mind's ear when setting to work on the Act 1 trio 'Soave sia il vento' in *Così fan tutte* almost a decade and a half later.

● Linda Zoghby and Margaret Marshall *sops* Della Jones *mez*
Lausanne Chamber Orchestra / Antal Dorati (Philips, 9/80)

Mozart Mass in C minor, K427 (1783) Pergolesi's writing for the voices in his *Stabat mater* was a lesson not lost on Mozart, the doyen of operatic vocal writing, who takes his innate understanding of the female voice to its most florid extreme in his C minor Mass. One of the sopranos at the first performance was perhaps his wife, Constanze. After a pair of solo outings the two women vie for supremacy in the 'Domine Deus' and the 'Quoniam', for the latter of which they are joined by a warbling tenor.

● Sylvia McNair *sop* Diana Montague *mez* Anthony Rolfe Johnson *ten*
Monteverdi Choir; EBS / John Eliot Gardiner (Philips, 5/88)

Schnittke Seid nüchtern und wachet ... (Faust Cantata) (1982)

For something diametrically opposed to all this heady religious music try this – not only a retelling of the timeless Faust legend but also a cheeky conspectus of German music history, with a massive, amplified tango as its centrepiece, as Mephistopheles tears Faust's body to shreds. The Devil, being two-faced, is represented by two singers, a miked-up mezzo and a countertenor, who duet lubriciously, like smudged Strauss, in the duet 'Doktor Faustus klagte' – the oleaginous up-beat to an exhilarating terpsichorean climax.

● Inger Blom *mez* Mikael Bellini *countertenor* Malmö Symphony
Chorus and Orchestra / James DePreist (BIS, 8/89)

Opera



Lindsay Kemp listens to *The Sixteen* in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*:

'The singers are not the operatically outgoing sort but they offer an appropriate vocal beauty and intimacy' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111**



Mark Pullinger hears a live 1979 *Queen of Spades* from Moscow:

'Hvorostovsky was on imperious form, silky yet virile, phrases pouring like molten gold' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 113**

Adès

The Exterminating Angel

Joseph Kaiser *ten* Edmundo de Nobile
Amanda Echalaz *sop* Lucía de Nobile
Audrey Luna *sop* Leticia Maynar
Alice Coote *mez* Leonora Palma
Sally Matthews *sop* Silvia de Ávila
Iestyn Davies *counterten* Francisco de Ávila
Christine Rice *mez* Blanca Delgado
Rod Gilfry *bar* Alberto Roc
Sophie Bevan *sop* Beatriz
David Portillo *ten* Eduardo
Frédéric Antoun *ten* Raúl Yebenes
David Adam Moore *bar* Colonel Álvaro Gómez
Kevin Burdette *bass* Señor Russell
Sir John Tomlinson *bass* Doctor Carlos Conde
The Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra / Thomas Adès

Stage director **Tom Cairns**

Video director **Gary Halvorson**

Erato (F) DVD 9029 55255-0; (E) Blu-ray Disc 9029 55254-9
 (128' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • s)
 Recorded live, November 18, 2017
 Includes synopsis



Screen filming can do a troubled opera like this one a multitude of favours. When I saw Tom Cairns's production of *The Exterminating Angel* at the Royal Danish Opera in 2018 I came away convinced that the work wanted to be a dark orchestral fantasy more than an opera. This filming of the same production from the Met suggests it's really an intimate domestic drama that would be best staged in the round. Either way, getting up-close and personal with Adès's conglomeration of 15 or so principals, a hundred-odd instrumentalists and squealing ondes martenot is far more easily done via this directorially magnificent filming than in any opera house.

Let alone the Met. If the opera is partly a satire on the opera crowd then this house's audience isn't going to enliven the joke. All those self-regarding

references to opera and good taste feel just a bit toe-curling when taken at face value (the gag about Americans having lost sight of standards when it comes to formal attire is more or less met with a 'true, that'). You need to see the opera at least twice to get your head around the many guests who arrive at the dinner party from hell and never leave it. Put the hours in and you have to conclude that most of them are flimsily realised, some are out-and-out caricatures (I don't think posterity will be kind to the off-the-shelf OCD sufferer Francisco) and the most interesting (Blanca, Leonora, Beatriz and Eduardo) are forced to blossom without much preparation even when the cameras throw us a lifeline.

Adès's musical drawing of the hosts Lucía and Edmundo shows what he can do, even if there's nowhere much for them to go. The stratospheric coloratura Leticia gets the work's last word but, even on this close-recorded, crystalline performance from Audrey Luna, it's impossible to decipher much of what she sings given its altitude, which is simply un-operatic. She could be inspired by an unhinged Gerald Barry character but has little of the wildness needed to make her outlandish noises into something theatrical.

The most enjoyable moments are those in which this unwieldy tapestry focuses itself on a single point, as during the final chorus and the interludes. And nobody films this stuff as imaginatively as the Met's team led by Gary Halvorson. One camera tracks through the pit; another creeps through the slips to show you the offstage percussionists and their conductor watching Adès on a monitor; another twists vertically upwards from the hands of Cynthia Millar at her ondes martenot.

That further emphasises the point that the theatre here is predominantly non-vocal. At least Adès's foundations are sure. His use of intervallic tension, patterning and passacaglia and his unlocking of fluency from those rigid

structures is thrilling, not least as the work bulges with *Lulu*-like tragedy. But if the orchestra does the work of the characters, is that opera? Discuss.

Like *Figaro* and *Nixon* before it, the work slides towards a series of monologues, which makes for some standout performances. Christine Rice gives Blanca everything, even when not deploying her fruity mezzo. Joseph Kaiser is a commanding presence as the host Edmundo and Amanda Echalaz brings the huffing, puffing Lucía to life with wit and stature. In a cast sweating to announce clearly, Iestyn Davies works particularly hard. Alice Coote is great to watch and hear but her character's cul-de-sac of stereotyped psychotic behaviour crystallises one of the opera's central problems. In Copenhagen the opera had a conductor other than Adès for the first time. In New York his presence suggests that if anyone can come near to taming the beast, it's the man who spawned it.

Andrew Mellor

Cavalli

'Ombra mai fu'

Gli amori d'Apollo e di Dafne - Ohimé, che miro? ... Misero Apollo **Calisto** - Erme, e solinghe cime ... Lucidissima face; Intreprete mal buona ... L'uomo è una dolce cosa; Ninfa bella **Doriclea** - Sinfonia **Elena** - Ecco l'idol mio ... Mio diletto, mio sospiro **Eliogabalo** - Sinfonia; lo resto solo? ... Misero, così va **Ercole amanti** - Sinfonia **Erismenea** - Dove mi conducete ... Uscitemi dal cor, lacrime amare **Eritrea** - Ô luci belle **Giasone** - Delizie, contenti **Orione** - Sinfonia **Ormino** - Che città che costumi **Pompeo Magno** - Cieche Tenebre **Statira, principessa di Persia** - All'armi mio core **La Virtù dei Strali d'amore** - Alcu più di me felice non è; Che pensi, mio core?; Il diletto interrotto ... Desia la Verginella **Xerse** - La bellezza è un don fugace; Ombra mai fu
Philippe Jaroussky *counterten* with **Emőke Baráth** *sop* **Marie-Nicole Lemieux** *contr*
Ensemble Artaserse
 Erato (F) 9029 55181-9; (E) ● 9029 55038-4
 (65' • DDD)
 Includes texts and translations



Live from the Met: Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* is shown in its best light up-close and personal



Francesco Cavalli's 33 surviving operas provide a rich playground for

any period performer and the countertenor Philippe Jaroussky throws himself into all that's on offer in his latest recording, with a little help from his own Ensemble Artaserse and some very starry musical friends.

The title feels like a deliberate provocation: 'Ombra mai fu', but not as you know it. The idea of Handel as a point of departure for Baroque opera, a point of navigation for listeners less familiar with Cavalli, is an interesting one, and the comparison doesn't always shake out in the former's favour. If Handel's *Xerxes* has a showmanship, an aesthetic swagger that Cavalli's lacks in the lilting prettiness of his own ode to a plane tree, we see the Italian's skill emerge elsewhere – in the delicacy with which he paints grief, loneliness and loss.

Apollo's 'Misero Apollo', the chromatic bruises on Idraspe's

'Uscitemi dal cor', even the unfulfilled longings of Endimione alone in the mountains singing his hopes in 'Lucidissima face' – all show the composer's skill at painting psychology, even within closed forms. No one manipulates a ground bass quite so skilfully; and Artaserse's feathery strings, and cornetts whose virtuoso *pianissimos* have a wonderfully tactile, textured quality to them, cocoon the singers with their intimate accompaniments.

Jaroussky too is at his best in these whispery, crooned laments where the voice treads the line between sound and silence. In the heroic showpieces and exaggerated comedy numbers, however (Brimonte's 'All'armi' from *Statira*; Eumene's 'La bellezza è un don fugace' from *Xerxes*), we see the limitations of a light voice that can easily get shrill and nasal when too much pressure is applied. Is it a price worth paying for that agility and purity? On balance it probably is, especially when it comes bolstered by colleagues including the contralto Marie-Nicole Lemieux (whose Linfea overflows with sensuality) and the soprano Emőke Baráth. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Cellier

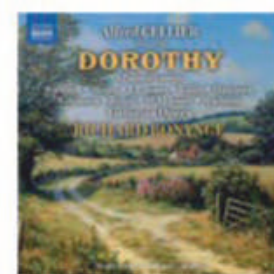
Dorothy

Majella Cullagh *sop* Dorothy Bantam
Lucy Vallis *mez* Lydia Hawthorne
Stephanie Maitland *mez* Phyllis Tuppitt
Matt Mears *ten* Geoffrey Wilder
John Ieuan Jones *bar* Harry Sherwood
Edward Robinson *bar* Sir John Bantam
Patrick Relph *bar* John Tuppitt
Michael Vincent Jones *ten* Lurcher
Sebastian Maclaine *ten* Tom Strutt
Victorian Opera Chorus and Orchestra /

Richard Bonyng

Naxos ® 8 660447 (71' • DDD)

Includes synopsis; libretto available from naxos.com



If asked to name the most successful English operetta of the 19th century, you'd probably go for *The Mikado* or *The Gondoliers*. And you'd be wrong: it was *Dorothy*, by Sullivan's former assistant Alfred Cellier. Opening in September 1886, *Dorothy* ran for an unprecedented 931 performances in the West End,

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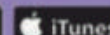
OSCAR WILDE

Newly released by Roven Records,
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Jonathan Hays, baritone Craig Ketter, piano

Now Available on Amazon and iTunes



beating *The Mikado*'s record of 672 and sending a rattled Gilbert & Sullivan back to the drawing board to create *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

So this premiere recording fills a genuine gap. *Dorothy* is a 'pastoral comedy opera' set in rural Kent, where the miserly Squire Bantam's daughter Dorothy and niece Lydia spurn arranged marriages, but find themselves falling in love with two handsome strangers who turn out – you guessed it – to be their intended fiancés, incognito. The period is the 18th century: a popular choice for turn-of-the-century comedies, though Cellier's genial score can't quite muster the roistering verve of, say, Edward German's *Tom Jones* or the Cajun spice of Victor Herbert's *Naughty Marietta*.

But Cellier does a nice line in lilting ballads and waltz-songs; and, with Richard Bonyng at the helm of an orchestra that would have done any Victorian theatre proud, we can enjoy both the graceful swing of Cellier's melodies and his luminous little touches of colour: a radiant evening chorus in Act 2, a sequence of country dances in Act 3 and an ensemble built around chiming clocks. Cast and chorus sound fresh, and there isn't an unenjoyable voice here. You don't expect or need heavyweight singing in this repertoire, though Majella Cullagh has richness to spare as Dorothy and John Ieuan Jones, as Harry Sherwood, brings warmth to the show's big hit number, 'Queen of my heart'.

If Edward Robinson (as Bantam) and Michael Vincent Jones as the bailiff Lurcher (the main comic relief) perhaps sound a little too bright and young for their characters, that's understandable in the context of this recording, where the emphasis has clearly been less on creating the illusion of a theatrical production than giving the finest possible musical performance of a neglected score. In that, Victorian Opera certainly succeeds, and the individual voices blend well in the numerous gracefully written ensembles.

Spoken dialogue is omitted – perhaps mercifully, having read the libretto, which is not included in the booklet but can be downloaded from the Naxos website. Alternatively, for £2 you can purchase a nicely illustrated 'souvenir booklet' direct from Victorian Opera and contribute in a small way to future adventures in this delightful repertoire.

Richard Bratby

M-A Charpentier

Les arts florissans.

La couronne de fleurs (excs)

Mailys de Villoutreys *sop*..... La Musique/Roselie

Virginie Thomas *sop*..... La Poésie/Flore

Jonathan Spicher *ten*..... La Peinture

Anaïs Bertrand *mez*..... L'Architecture/Hyacinthe

David Witczak *bar*..... La Discorde

Cécile Achille *sop*..... La Paix/Amaranthe

Virgile Ancely *bass*..... Warrior

Ensemble Marguerite Louise / Gaétan Jarry

Château de Versailles Spectacles © CVS001

(59' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Charpentier's pastoral entertainments *Les arts florissans* and *La couronne de fleurs*

(1685) were commissioned by the Mademoiselle de Guise to celebrate Louis XIV's recent military victories and the restoration of peace. They were performed by her household ensemble of about 15 musicians, whereas Gaétan Jarry and Ensemble Marguerite Louise field somewhat larger forces for a performance recorded in connection to an outdoor production at the palace of Versailles in summer 2017; photos of the dress rehearsal make one wish one had been there.

La couronne de fleurs is an adaptation of Charpentier's prologue to Molière's *comédie-ballet Le malade imaginaire* (1673). Concise extracts depict shepherds celebrating the return of peace after the horrors of war; a few more were recorded by Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs with their Bostonians. Nevertheless, Jarry's main attraction is a gently sensual interpretation of the idyll *Les arts florissans* – an allegorical divertissement in which Music, Poetry, Painting and Architecture proclaim how their respective arts glorify the Sun King. Its first recording for nearly 40 years has elegant sensuality, nowhere more so than in Music's softly harmonious accompanied recitative 'Que mes divins concerts' (sung gorgeously by Mailys de Villoutreys), and even the clamorous interruption of a chorus of warriors soon resolves into sweet relief at hearing Music's 'celestial melodious accents'. Likewise, Poetry (sung soothingly by Virginie Thomas) and the chorus observe that 'It is better not to say anything than to say something feebly'. The disturbance generated by Discord (the extrovert baritone David Witczak) and the Furies expressing their bitter hatred of the happiness created by the king threatens everyone's contentment until they are banished calmly by Peace (the ideally

serene Cécile Achille). Poetry restores the blissful mood, celebrated by all four flourishing arts and the chorus in a lovely chaconne – suggesting that anything Lully can do well, Charpentier can do better.

David Vickers

Les arts florissans – selected comparison:

Arts Florissants, Christie (6/82^R) (HARM) HAF890 1083

La couronne de fleurs – selected comparison:

Boston Early Music Festival, O'Dette, Stubbs

(9/14) (CPO) CPO777 876-2

Handel

Acis and Galatea

Jeremy Budd *ten*..... Acis

Grace Davidson *sop*..... Galatea

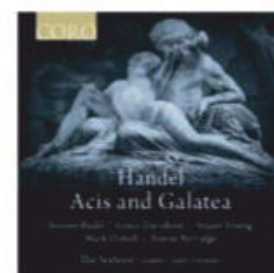
Stuart Young *bass*..... Polyphemus

Mark Dobell *ten*..... Damon

Simon Berridge *ten*..... Coridon

The Sixteen / Harry Christophers

Coro © ② COR16169 (89' • DDD • T)



As David Vickers pointed out in his *Gramophone* Collection article last October, it

took a long time for recordings of Handel's delightful pastoral to come round to essentially the same forces – and even roles – that the composer wrote it for; this newcomer becomes only the fifth since 2007 to cast five singers in five roles and then use those same singers as the chorus alongside a minimal orchestra. Indeed, Harry Christophers's may be the smallest yet, for its tiny band is strictly one-to-a-part, the only luxury among its nine players a harp in the continuo section.

Such matters do not count for everything, though, and it certainly doesn't stop the larger-scale versions by John Eliot Gardiner (Archiv, 9/78) and William Christie (Erato, 9/99) from being rightly celebrated and enjoyed for their dramatic flair and fine singing. But there is no doubt that the smaller forces bring not only greater clarity and sweetness but also uplifting drafts of clean air that seem entirely appropriate to the work. There is greater human vulnerability and sympathy in the choruses, too.

As you might expect in a performance cast from the members of The Sixteen, the singers are not the operatically outgoing sort. Rather, they offer an uncomplicated vocal beauty and intimacy which, together with that of orchestra, seems appropriate to the nature of a piece more closely related to Handel's early Italian cantatas and serenatas than to his more recent London operas. There are pluses and minuses, of course: Grace Davidson's Galatea sounds

perfectly lovely but she can be guilty of plainness when stronger reactions to text or situation are required, while as Damon Mark Dobell gives a sensitive ‘Consider, fond shepherd’ but struggles elsewhere with passagework. Jeremy Budd’s Acis is alert and lightly forceful, however, and his final duet with Davidson as the two lovers stand up to Polyphemus’s rage sounds appropriately haunted by disaster even before the big fellow blunders in. Stuart Young’s Polyphemus, indeed, provides the most impressive singing and acting here, conjuring a monster who roars and blusters but stops short of pantomime villainy. Simon Berridge does all one could ask of him in his single aria as Coridon.

Christophers conducts with style and skill, and the little orchestra plays wonderfully for him, highlighting details that can often go past unnoticed. (Perhaps a less oboe-dominated balance would have revealed even more.) His stated view of the piece as graceful, charming and innocent is well realised by his easy-going tempos and apparent concern not to be heavy-handed with the drama, but there is no doubt that it comes at a price when set beside the similarly scaled but more intense, willingly driven and vocally engaged performances conducted by John Butt (Linn, 1/09) and Christian Curnyn (Chandos, 8/18). This one has its charms, for sure, but not everyone will want things to be quite so relaxed. **Lindsay Kemp**

Lorenzani

Nicandro e Fileno

Nils Brown *ten*.....Nicandro
Jean-Marc Salzmann *bar*.....Fileno
Suzie LeBlanc *sop*.....Filli
Pascale Beaudin *sop*.....Clori
Philippe Gagné *ten*.....Lidio
Dominique Côté *bar*.....Eurillo

Les Boréades de Montréal / Francis Colpron

ATMA Classique © ACD2 2770 (65' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



The Roman Paolo Lorenzani (1640-1713) was the only Italian musician other than

Lully to hold a court post during the reign of Louis XIV (he was *maître de musique* to Queen Marie-Thérèse). In September 1681 his short pastoral opera *Nicandro e Fileno* (on a libretto in Italian by the Duke of Nevers, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin) was performed at Fontainebleau for the king. The original production included a prologue, spoken dialogue improvised by actors from the Théâtre-italien and from

the Comédie-française, comic intermezzos and an epilogue – none of which are included in this recording by Le Nouvel Opéra. Instead, we get the core drama: the decrepit widowers Nicandro and Fileno decide that their remaining years will be spent more happily if they marry each other’s daughters. Needless to say, the girls Filli and Clori have other ideas – although both are in love with the silver-tongued playboy Lidio.

The amorous shenanigans are depicted in an intriguing synthesis of musical elements that resembles Stradella adjusted to French taste. Nils Brown and Jean-Marc Salzmann play up the comic absurdity of the fathers. Suzie LeBlanc’s Filli has an articulate sparkle; an extended complaint about the agonies of love (‘Con inviti lusinghieri’) matches the soprano’s intelligent poeticism with doleful recorders and strings. Pascale Beaudin’s fruitier Clori captures her bitterness potently when she realises that Lidio prefers Filli (‘Lassa che far degg’io?’). The shallow Lidio is sung suavely by Philippe Gagné, whereas Dominic Côté conveys touching pathos as the scorned Eurillo. Francis Colpron directs the Montreal band Les Boréades with zestiness, nonchalance or expressive melancholy as each scene requires.

David Vickers

Messenger

Les p’tites Michu

Violette Polchi *mez*.....Marie-Blanche
Anne-Aurore Cochet *sop*.....Blanche-Marie
Philippe Estèphe *bar*.....Gaston Rigaud
Marie Lenormand *mez*.....Mme Michu
Damien Bigourdan *ten*.....M Michu
Boris Grappe *bar*.....Le Général des Ifs
Artavazd Sargsyan *ten*.....Aristide
Caroline Meng *mez*.....Mlle Herpin
Romain Dayez *bar*.....Bagnolet

Chorus of Angers Nantes Opera; Pays de la Loire

National Orchestra / Pierre Dumoussaud

Palazetto Bru Zane © ② BZ1034 (103' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Many people know the Donkey duet (‘Trot here and there’) from *Véronique*, an *opéra comique* staged at the Bouffes-Parisiens in

December 1898; but few nowadays could hum a tune from Messenger’s previous success at the same theatre a year earlier. The plot of *The Little Michus* hinges on a question of identity: which of two girls brought up as twin sisters is the daughter of a general, and which is the child of the Michus, humble shopkeepers from Les Halles.

Although the denouement is different there’s an echo here of Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Gondoliers*, as Messenger probably spotted when he received the libretto: he himself had composed an operetta, *Mirette*, for D’Oyly Carte and the Savoy Theatre in 1894. Blanche-Marie and Marie-Blanche are inseparable: they are distressed when told that the general wishes his daughter to marry one of his officers, but the situation becomes more complicated when it turns out that the officer is Gaston, whom they both fancy. And then there is Aristide, the Michus’ shop assistant, who loves both girls and can’t decide which one he wants. The girls are paired off at first with the wrong suitors, but the resourceful Marie-Blanche dresses her sister up as a lady: the result is that Blanche-Marie looks exactly a portrait of the general’s late wife, so it’s quite clear who is who.

The hit number was ‘Blanche-Marie et Marie-Blanche’, the duet following the opening chorus, which is reprised at the very end. But there are many other examples of wit and charm, such as the fizzing quartet ‘Entre la! Mais pourquoi?’ that recalls ‘Nous avons en tête une affaire’ in *Carmen*. Once in a while, Messenger will do something both simple and audacious: you might well catch your breath at the harmonic sideslip in the refrain of ‘Vois-tu, je m’en veux’ in Act 3. And the tenderness of ‘Rassurez-vous, monsieur Gaston’, when Blanche-Marie and Gaston are each concealing their true feelings, will touch your heart.

There are no great voices to be heard in the Compagnie des Brigands but the performance (from a staging in Nantes) comes across with splendid vigour. The ‘sisters’ are well contrasted, Violette Polchi’s bright soprano offset by the rich mezzo of Anne-Aurore Cochet. Philippe Estèphe is a very personable Gaston, and Boris Grappe makes a strong impression as General des Ifs, who is evidently related to General Boum from Offenbach’s *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*. The chorus and orchestra under Pierre Dumoussaud are excellent. This fine offering in Palazetto Bru Zane’s CD-cum-book series of French operas includes an exemplary translation of the libretto and articles by Charles Johnston. **Richard Lawrence**

Rota

La notte di un nevristenico

Giorgio Celenza *bar*.....The Neurotic
Carlo Feola *bass-bar*.....Concierge
Daniele Adriani *ten*.....Commendatore
Sabrina Cortese *sop*.....She
Antonio Sapio *ten*.....He



I due timidi

Giorgio Celenza *bar*..... Narrator
Sabrina Cortese *sop*..... Mariuccia
Daniele Adriani *ten*..... Raimondo
Chiara Osella *mez*..... Mrs Guidotti
Antonio Sapio *ten*..... Dr Sinisgalli
Mariangela De Vita *mez*..... Mariuccia's Mother
Giacomo Nanni *bass-bar* Vittorio
Reate Festival Orchestra / Gabriele Bonolis

Stage director **Cesare Scarton**

Video director **Maxim Derevianko**

Dynamic ② CDS7830; ② DVD 37830;

② 57830 (99' • DDD • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Teatro Flavio Vespasiano,
 Rieti, September 30 - October 1, 2017

CD includes synopsis, libretto and translation;

DVD & Blu-ray include synopsis



Unsurprisingly, the man who scored *The Godfather* knew how to get hearts racing in the opera house. Nino Rota's best-known work in the medium, *Il cappello di paglia di Firenze* ('The Florentine Straw Hat', 1955) crops up in the catalogue now and then but here we have two one-acters that came either side of it: *I due timidi* ('The Two Timid Ones') was written for radio broadcast by RAI in 1950 and *La notte di un nevrastenico* ('The Night of a Neurotic') premiered at La Scala's second stage a decade later. It's not just clunky titles they have in common. Both use hotels as their setting and poke fun at supposed foibles in adult disposition. If the latter doesn't deter promoters, the former means they're easily staged together with a single set, as here at the 2017 Reate Festival.

Still, anyone arguing the case for their revival will have to work hard selling the plots. *I due timidi*, with a libretto by Suso Cecchi D'Amico, hinges on two consecutive cases of instantaneous mistaken

identity that mean would-be lovers marry the wrong partners and are separated for ever (think an inverted *Così fan tutte*). That's fine in a farcical comedy, but the music Rota writes is serious. Eventually, soaked in Mediterranean romanticism as the parted lovers sing of what might have been, it breaks your heart but the slapstick premise can't support the *verismo* tragedy.

If you can get past that, it is a gorgeous piece. Rota can't quite muster Puccini's final layer of harmonic interest and novel orchestration but he rivals his senior for melodic generosity and is brilliant with vocal characterisation and linguistic clarity. His lyrical ensemble pieces are wondrous. He is not afraid of introducing external styles in the service of theatre – jazz in *I due* and mambo in *La notte* – and is alive to dramatic direction and emotional interplay, albeit in a more micro than macro sense.

In *La notte*, not quite as convincing as its longer predecessor, we are again faced with the question of how far Rota and his librettist, Riccardo Bacchelli, meant their story to be read ironically. This opera tells of a neurotic insomniac trying to get a good night's sleep. We might recoil at the mockery of an individual with anxiety issues; but there could be an argument that Rota's score pleads sympathetically for the title character while the 'normal' folk – two guests having loud sex in one adjacent room, a policeman dropping his heavy footwear in another – are the real subjects of mockery (not that this production attempts it). It is a leaner, spikier work than its companion.

The performances are simply staged with a touch of *commedia dell'arte* and allowed to blossom in all the right ways by the conductor Gabriele Bonolis. There's some ragged orchestral work but lovely singing that indulges Rota's irresistible legatos. Daniele Adriani stands out as the male lover Raimondo in *I due* and as the Commendatore in *La notte*. His is not a classic Italian tenor sound, rather

something with more grain but still adequate smoothness and notable presence.

Sabrina Cortese shines far more as his lover than as the female sex addict in *La notte*, while the big number from Mrs Guidotti, who Raimondo accidentally marries, captures the moment in Chiara Osella's stopped-diapason mezzo, projected with fortitude.

Giorgio Celenza doesn't quite know what to do with himself as the Narrator in *I due* but proves a malleable spirit for director Cesare Scarton as the insomniac in *La notte*. I wonder if his final act of violence played out here is there in the text. Otherwise, it strikes me that Scarton, too, is a little confused as to whether we're dealing with farce or tragic observation. The safest option is to stick to the CD versions and revel in two engaging theatrical scores. They are nice little discoveries and might well prove the same for those opera companies who have adopted more flexible repertoire configurations or conservatories preparing their students for the professional stage. **Andrew Mellor**

Tchaikovsky

The Queen of Spades

Vitaly Tarashchenko *ten*..... Herman
Natalia Datsko *sop*..... Lisa
Irina Arkhipova *mez*..... Countess
Grigory Gritsyuk *bar*..... Count Tomsky
Dmitri Hvorostovsky *bar*..... Prince Yeletsky
Nina Romanova *mez*..... Polina
Alexander Dyachenko *ten*..... Chekalinsky
Alexander Vedernikov *bass*..... Surin
Vladimir Grishko *ten*..... Chaplitsky
Oleg Klenov *bar*..... Narumov
Tatiana Kuzminova *mez*..... Governess
Lidia Chernyk *sop*..... Masha
Yurlov Republican Academic Choral Capella;
Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra /
Vladimir Fedoseyev

Meldoya ③ MELCD100 2549 (161' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, December 25, 1989

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Andrea Marcon, Artistic Director





Three quotes head the booklet note for this Melodiya recording of *The Queen of Spades* –

by Alexander Pushkin, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky ... and Dmitri Hvorostovsky. Poet, composer, star baritone. Hvorostovsky is very much the *raison d'être* for this release. His death in 2017 robbed the opera world of one of its greatest singers, yet here is a memento from early in his career, just months after his 1989 coronation as Cardiff Singer of the World. It was a contest famously remembered as the 'Battle of the Baritones', the other main contender being home boy Bryn Terfel. In that final, two moments stood out: Posa's death scene from *Don Carlo* and Yeletsky's aristocratic aria 'Ya vas lyublyu' from *The Queen of Spades*.

Six months later, on December 25, Hvorostovsky made his Moscow debut in a concert performance of *The Queen of Spades*, recorded for radio and now receiving its first CD release. This was around the time his debut recital disc of Tchaikovsky and Verdi arias was recorded (Philips, 7/90), which included Yeletsky's aria. It's a cough-and-spit role – a role that doesn't even exist in Pushkin – but star baritones will always be drawn to it for that glorious aria. Speaking to Alan Blyth in a *Gramophone* interview published to coincide with the release of that Philips disc, Hvorostovsky was already bored with it. 'I've been a full-time Yeletsky for too long!' he sighed. Well, he'd go on singing it for some time, his final performance coming in 2005 at La Scala.

In the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, Hvorostovsky was on imperious form, silky yet virile, phrases pouring like molten gold, although it's interesting to note snatches of breath which became even more audible as his career progressed. Soon afterwards, Hvorostovsky recorded the role in the studio on Seiji Ozawa's complete recording. He's in better company there – Vladimir Atlantov, Mirella Freni and Sergei Leiferkus – but it's great to hear him live in Moscow, where the audience takes him to their hearts.

The other name in bold on the cover is the legendary mezzo Irina Arkhipova, here making her role debut as the Countess. Frankly, she deserves to share the star billing, because she sings – rather than growls – the role wonderfully. The rest of the cast is solid. Vitaly Tarashchenko's intonation not always secure – which is fine

for an unhinged character like Herman! – and he's sometimes a little effortful, but he and Natalia Datsko (Lisa) spark together in their big duets, which see Vladimir Fedoseyev and the Moscow Radio Symphony Orchestra catch fire. Datsko can sound a little raw at the top but her Lisa is heartfelt.

Elsewhere, Fedoseyev, conducting this opera for the first time, can be remarkably stodgy, not a patch on Mariss Jansons on his superb BR-Klassik recording (also made in concert). The Faithful Shepherdess divertissement is very heavy-handed and the orchestral playing is not particularly distinguished, the clarinets woody, the strings pale. The chorus, the Yurlov Republican Academic Choral Capella, however, is wonderfully spirited.

There are no libretto texts and translations but the presentation is neat – three cardboard slipcases, each with a stylish photograph indicating the three cards that make up the Countess's winning formula. And, at mid-price, this Melodiya release isn't much of a gamble.

Mark Pullinger

Selected comparisons:

Ozawa (11/92^R) (RCA) 88697 52771-2

Jansons (A/15) (BRKL) 900129

'L'Alessandro amante'

Bononcini Abdolomino - Preludio. L'Euleo festeggiante nel ritorno d'Alessandro Magno dall'Indie - Chiare faci al di cui lume; Da tuoi lumi **Draghi** La vittoria della fortezza - È insofferabile temerità; Premi e pene sono i fiori **Handel** Alessandro - Vano amore. Poro, re dell'Indie - Se possono tanto due luci vezzose **Leo** Alessandro in Persia - Dirti, ben mio, vorrei **F Mancini** Alessandro il grande in Sidone - Sinfonia; Spirti fieri alla vendetta **Pescetti** Alessandro nell'Indie - Serbati a grandi imprese **Porpora** Poro - Destrier ch'all'armi usato **Steffani** Il zelo di Leonato - Sinfonia **Vinci** Alessandro nell'Indie - Serbati a grandi imprese **Xavier Sabata** *counterten* **Vespres d'Arnadí / Dani Espasa** *hpd* Aparté © AP192 (65' • DDD) Includes texts and translations



Xavier Sabata has taken Alexander the Great as the subject of his latest recital, a carefully programmed and finely executed disc, as one might expect from a singer whose work has always combined beauty, intelligence and psychological perception in equal measure. It is not intended as a character study. More operas, Sabata reminds us in a booklet note, were

written about Alexander the Great in the 17th and 18th centuries than any other historical figure, and what Sabata gives us tells us as much, if not more, about the complex responses to Alexander on the part of Baroque composers as it does about the man himself.

The title, derived from a lost opera by Giovanni Antonio Boretti, is in some ways ambiguous. Not all the arias are sung by Alexander himself, which allows Sabata to observe him from within and without, both as lover and beloved, though the idea of love itself extends here beyond the private sphere to embrace the avidity of conquest and a passion for empire. The historical Alexander was bisexual, which permitted composers free rein with the resulting ambivalences. In *L'Euleo festeggiante nel ritorno d'Alessandro Magno dall'Indie*, Bononcini presents him as an object of male desire in 'Da tuoi lumi', sung by one of his cavalry officers, but as himself desirous of women in the reflective 'Chiare faci'. Arias from *Poro* by Porpora and Handel view Alexander from a respectful distance, the former excited by his prowess as a warrior, the latter as seeking love after the heat of battle. Elsewhere, desire and politics intersect in very different settings by Pescetti and Vinci of 'Serbati a grandi imprese' from Metastasio's *Alessandro nell'Indie*, and the dithering, conflicted hero of Handel's *Alessandro* is nicely contrasted with his courtly, refined counterpart in Leo's *Alessandro in Persia*.

Sabata sings this complex programme with his customary elegance and flair. His dark, warm alto has always sounded good in slower arias, where the long lines flow with ease and his breath control is exemplary. 'Chiare luci', his voice hovering dreamily over Bononcini's rapt instrumental counterpoint, is ravishing, while Pescetti's 'Serbati' finds him at his most eloquent as private regret and public duty contend within Alexander's mind. His coloratura, always placed at the service of characterisation or drama, can be spectacular. The florid lines and erratic syncopations of Handel's 'Vano amore' hint at self-dramatisation as well as confusion, while Porpora's 'Destrier ch'all'armi usato', with its vertiginous plunging and rearing between chest and head voices, is a thrilling portrait of a charismatic man of action. The Barcelona-based Vespres D'Arnadí, meanwhile, play with terrific precision and élan for Dani Espasa, and the close recording adds to the immediacy of it all. A wonderfully accomplished recital, and highly recommended. **Tim Ashley**



Carefully programmed and finely executed: Xavier Sabata's latest recital album surveys 17th- and 18th-century portrayals of Alexander the Great

'L'opéra des opéras'

Excerpts from **Bertin de la Doué** *Le jugement de Pâris* **Campra** *Achille et Déidamie*. *Le carnaval de Venise*. *Les Muses*
Colin de Blamont *Les fêtes grecques et romaines* **M-A Charpentier** *Médée* **Dauvergne** *Les amours de Tempé*. *Énée et Lavinie*. *Hercule mourant* **Destouches/Dauvergne** *Callirhoé*
Francoeur/Rebel *Pyrame et Thisbé*.
Scanderberg **Gervais** *Hypermnestre* **Leclair** *Scylla et Glaucus* **Lully** *Armide* **Marais** *Alcyone*
Mondonville *Le carnaval du Parnasse*. *Titon et l'Aurore* **Montéclair** *Jephté* **Rameau** *Dardanus*.
Les fêtes de Polymnie. *Les fêtes d'Hébé*.
Hippolyte et Aricie. *Le temple de la gloire*
Stuck *Méléagre*
Katherine Watson *sop* **Karine Deshayes** *mez*
Reinoud Van Mechelen *haute-contre*
Le Concert Spirituel / Hervé Niquet
 Alpha © ALPHA442 (74' • DDD)
 Includes texts and translations



In 1671 Lully assembled a *Ballet des ballets*, a *pasticcio* made up of excerpts from his own works. Here Benoît Dratwicki, artistic director of the

Centre de Musique Baroque at Versailles, has done something similar for opera, but the music is not all by Lully: instead he has made a selection of pieces by a variety of composers, ranging in date from Lully (*Armide*, 1686) to Destouches and Dauvergne (*Callirhoé*, 1773).

In fact the disc ends with the Passacaille from *Armide*, which at eight minutes at last provides some relief from a hectic succession of mainly brief numbers. The beautiful 'Lieux funestes' from Rameau's *Dardanus* could have done the same, but Hervé Niquet takes it at such a lick as to make it sound almost restless. (Compare his 3'25" with Pichon's 4'45" and Minkowski's 6'12" on their respective recordings of the complete opera.) The invented story is about a prince and a princess, mutually in love, and a 'witch queen' who, loving the prince in vain, plots his destruction. The queen conjures up a storm which lashes the seashore. The lovers survive but the queen, stricken with remorse and thinking the prince dead, plunges into the waves.

At the beginning of the action the prince has slain a monster and defeated the enemies of the kingdom. There are one or two inconsistencies in the plot –

why the reference to Hercules, and of what crime is the queen guilty before she realises that she has a rival? – but no matter: Dratwicki has seized the opportunity to explore many different moods and situations. In general the musical juxtapositions work well: the Colin de Blamont excerpt, for instance, moves smoothly into a few seconds of Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*. But following the D minor of Dauvergne's *Les amours de Tempé* with the F minor of *Hercule mourant* is rather a jolt.

The three singers are splendid. As the princess, Katherine Watson duets euphoniously with the oboe of Héloïse Gaillard in a prayer to Cupid from Bertin de la Doué's *Le jugement de Pâris*. Karine Deshayes makes a fearsome 'reine magicienne' and Reinoud Van Mechelen shows off the top of his register with no sense of strain in 'Hâtons-nous' from *Dardanus*. The violins and oboes of Le Concert Spirituel are breathtakingly virtuoso in the storm from Marais's *Alcyone*. This is an excellent chance to enjoy a beguiling sequence of the (relatively) familiar and the (completely) unknown.

Richard Lawrence

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The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

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Trish Clowes

Ninety Degrees Gravity

Basho © SR-CD 562



The title is a nod to Denis Villeneuve's sci-fi hit *Arrival*, whose themes of communication and shifting perceptions

Clowes explores alongside tracks that see her comment on anything from the mechanics of sound – 'Lightning Les' refers to the fast setting of Ross Stanley's Hammond organ – to the overawing nature of the universe. Themes aside, the set is a consolidation of where Clowes's quartet left off on 2017's *My Iris* insofar there is a balance between the players, and a stylistic openness in the material, which shifts stealthily between a grounded, melodic accessibility and airy abstraction. Stanley's intelligent movement between piano and

organ provides a significant variety of detail and density in the ensemble sound. This is also reinforced by Clowes's own tone, which, on occasion, has a noticeably harder, weightier character than on previous releases. Furthermore, her decision to sing on 'Free To Fall' is a left of field manoeuvre that brings a notable change of mood to an album that has enough layers to warrant repeat listening. It marks another worthwhile stage in Clowes's steady growth as a contemporary artist. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Branford Marsalis

The Secret Between the Shadow and the Soul

Okeh/Marsalis Music © 19075 91403-2



If this isn't a candidate for record of the year from many reviewers, I'll be very surprised. It's an object lesson in how an

established group can dig deeper into musical and emotional resources than many a short-lived ensemble, however starry the personnel. It's grounded, harks back to the tradition, looks forward to new ideas, yet has a confident perfection that is extremely rare. The heart of the album is in the ballad playing. 'Conversation Among The Ruins' (written by Calderazzo) has not only a dazzling piano solo but some delicately poised playing from Marsalis on soprano, that isn't afraid to explore beauty and melodic richness. And just a few bars of the quartet's version of Keith Jarrett's 'The Windup' is enough to put a smile on one's face and relive the visceral experience of this band playing live. Within its catchy, funky setting, this track manages to combine moments of improvisational freedom, perfectly demonstrating why this is one of the most compelling live bands on the planet. **Alyn Shipton**

World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

Leyla McCalla

Capitalist Blues

Jazz Village © JV570154



There's a strong moral core to this album, which loosely operates as a song cycle about living in an unjust society in which

money doesn't just talk; it swears, and the poor are left to fend for themselves. Produced by Jimmy Horn of New Orleans R&B band King James & the Special Men and featuring a posse of top Louisiana musicians plus the Haitian collective Lakou Mizik, McCalla's songs range from swinging trad jazz (the title-track) to zydeco ('Oh My Love') via Haitian rara ('Lavi Vye Neg'), calypso ('Money is King'), ragtime ('Me and My Baby') and reverberating swamp rock ('Heavy as Lead'). Less folk-oriented than her

previous solo albums, the mood is defiantly upbeat, fired by a powerful spirit of resistance, which offers the hope that a-change-is-gonna-come. 'I never imagined the *Capitalist Blues* would make me so damn happy,' she says. 'And perhaps that represents the paradox of it all.'

Nigel Williamson

Fran & Flora

Unfurl

Fran & Flora Productions © FFP01CD



Flora Curzon (violin) and Francesca Ter-Berg (cello) demonstrate a symbiotic musical relationship in this at times remarkable debut album. The duo are part of London's experimental folk and jazz scene, working with artists such as Talvin Singh, Sam Lee & Friends and Portico Quartet. Their own

particular jam is music from south-eastern Europe and beyond: from Romania, Greece and Armenia. Theirs is not a passing interest, however; Curzon and Ter-Berg have studied with masters of the music traditions of these regions. A clue to their immersion in this music is the singing on *Unfurl*, which is in Romanian and Yiddish and sounds idiomatic. 'La Obreja' (the title refers to a town in western Transylvania), a solo vocal, sounds timeless and pure. 'Mayn Rue Platz', an arrangement of a piece in Yiddish, is shone through a prism of electronics. But the string playing here is equally notable. 'Romanian Fantasies' is a simple duet of passionate violin tune and plucked cello accompaniment. On 'Nubar Nubar', the roles invert; a haunting, embellished cello melody is supported by low plucked lines on the violin, both instruments emerging out of the chimes of rustic bells. **Tim Woodall**

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REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

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Berlioz 150: a bumper box-set harvest

Mark Pullinger emerges from a 62-CD immersion in the composer's complete works

The 150th anniversary of the death of Hector Berlioz has given cause for some bumper box reissues. The composer was long appreciated better in Britain than in his native France, so it's appropriate that two boxes are conducted by a pair of illustrious knights who have championed Berlioz: Sir Colin Davis on LSO Live (16 discs, about £37) and Sir John Eliot Gardiner's period-instrument recordings with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique (eight CDs and one DVD, £28). A third conductor-focused box comes from DG which has gathered together Daniel Barenboim's recordings (10 discs, £36) made when he was Music Director of the Orchestre de Paris. In terms of volume, these are trumped by Warner Classics which has released the first-ever 'Complete Works' (27 discs, £58).

Berlioz Odyssey was the title given to Sir Colin Davis's series with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1999-2000, recordings from which appeared on some of the earliest releases on the orchestra's own label, LSO Live. Davis was a conductor who revisited Berlioz and renewed his relationship with his music constantly. His earlier LSO recordings on Philips, made in the 1960s and '70s, along with his Covent Garden *Les Troyens*, still form a benchmark for many listeners and it's slightly surprising that Universal has not (yet) chosen to mark the anniversary with a re-release of much classic material which has not been packaged together since 1997. That said, Davis's LSO Live series often matches – and sometimes even exceeds – those earlier studio recordings and this new box is highly treasurable.

A few of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Lyon recordings sneak into the Warner box, along with his world premiere account of the *Messe solennelle*, licensed from Universal to help achieve comprehensive status. That same *Messe solennelle* recording also

appears in Decca's new box, which is entitled **Berlioz Rediscovered** and features Gardiner's period instrument recordings with the excellent ORR. **Daniel Barenboim: Complete Berlioz Recordings** date from 1978-81, an immersion designed, as the conductor has since declared, to help him understand Wagner more fully.

The Complete Works

On his first stay in Paris, Wagner got to know Berlioz and his music. Writing in *Mein Leben*, Wagner admitted that whenever he heard one of Berlioz's major works, he was as enraptured as he was both repelled and bored. I'd love to know what Wagner would have made of some of the minor works – the juvenilia, the Prix de Rome entries, the state and ceremonial commissions – which pepper Warner Classics' **Complete Works** set. I can't imagine he'd have been that thrilled.

Quite what the judges were thinking in 1829 when they snubbed Berlioz's *Cléopâtre* and failed to award any first prize is a mystery

In any composer's output, there are going to be a few duds – the equivalent of Beethoven's *Wellington's Victory*. When inspiration fails to strike, Hector could be banal. Apparently, he dashed off the cantata *Le chant des chemins de fer* in three nights ahead of the inauguration in Lille of the Paris-Lille railway line in June 1846. Despite the efforts of Rolando Villazón and the choral and orchestral forces of Toulouse under Michel Plasson, it sounds more like Berlioz dashed it off in three hours. *La mort d'Orphée*, Berlioz's first failed attempt at winning the coveted Prix de Rome, comes off rather better under

the same forces. Ironically, the work with which he finally won the Prix de Rome – *Sardanapale* – only survives as a fragment, a pity on the evidence of the brief excerpt recorded here (licensed from Naxos). Quite what the judges were thinking in 1829 when they snubbed his *Cléopâtre* and failed to award any first prize is a mystery.

Warner Classics has chosen to group the works by genre, which is a little problematic given that a score such as *Roméo et Juliette* – dubbed a *symphonie dramatique* – has vocal soloists and choral forces. It's an approach which leaves the three constituent parts of his Op 18 *Tristia* split apart, the *Méditation religieuse* on Disc 8, *La mort d'Ophélie* (solo vocal version with piano only) and the powerful *Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet* lurking on Disc 12. Within genres, many works are programmed chronologically. The booklet contains a helpful index to locate items.

In chasing completeness, Warner has had to hire in a few recordings from other labels, its most noticeable gap being the cantata *Herminie*, which appears here in Dame Janet Baker's account with Colin Davis on Philips. It has also undertaken its own world premiere recordings from minor organ works to an early song 'La Dépit de la bergère' (charmingly sung by Elsa Dreisig). The fragments from an abandoned opera, *La nonne sanglante*, are the most tantalising new recordings, recitatives and five numbers persuasively sung by Véronique Gens, Mark Van Arsdales and Vincent Le Texier under Daniel Kawka's direction.

It's fascinating to stumble across germs of ideas which then resurface in later works. The *idée fixe* of the *Symphonie fantastique* appears in both the cantata *Herminie* and the *Messe solennelle*, but began life as a simple romance, 'Je vais donc quitter pour jamais', written as a teenager, of which one verse – unaccompanied – is sung here by Christophe Crapez. It's quite haunting to realise the



Loyal Berlioz champion Sir Colin Davis's complete live recordings of the composer with the LSO have been gathered together

life this theme would take on. Similarly, the *idée fixe* of *Harold en Italie* first appears in the overture *Rob Roy*. And it's fascinating to hear Berlioz's first thoughts on Faust, eight scenes acting as an early template for *La damnation*, although it's a surprise to hear Méphistophélès cast as a tenor.

Some of Warner's choices of recordings are puzzling. Take the very first disc, which features the overtures. We begin with the period-instrument tang of the London Classical Players under Sir Roger Norrington in *Les franc-juges*, a bracing, abrasive performance. Cut to Track 2 and we're suddenly plunged into the analogue hiss of Sir Adrian Boult and the London Philharmonic Orchestra playing *Waverley*, recorded in 1956. Not only is the stylistic leap jarring, the sudden differences in sound quality make it unsettling listening as a CD in itself. But then, is the purpose of a set like this for popping on a particular disc and enjoying it all the way through on its own merits? Or is it intended as a reference tool?

Is another aim to demonstrate the depth of Warner's catalogue? I propose to deal with the major works that also appear in the other boxed sets separately, but I can't believe that Jean Martinon's 1973 ORTF account of the *Symphonie fantastique* represents the best the label can lay its hands

on. Charles Munch's with the newly formed Orchestre de Paris, recorded in October 1967, three weeks before its inaugural concert, would have been a stronger choice. And it's inexplicable that the guardians of the HMV/EMI catalogue don't include any Beecham in this set. Sometimes, you get the feeling certain accounts are included simply because they're the only one Warner has on its roster. If that was the case, then the *Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale* deserved a fresh recording, because the instruments of the Musique des Gardiens de la Paix sound decrepit – clattering tea-tray percussion, a rattly old drum and asthmatic winds all very rough and ready.

It was a good idea to offer two versions of *Les nuits d'été*. Gardiner's Lyon account uses four different soloists, reflecting the work's origins, penned for four different singers. It is then followed by Dame Janet Baker's lovely recording with Sir John Barbirolli and the New Philharmonia – a gramophone classic. Of the other boxes, *Les nuits d'été* only turns up in the Barenboim box, a forgettable account from Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. Barenboim is the only competition when it comes to *Cléopâtre* too. Véronique Gens is superbly alert to the text for Warner, but she's up against Jessye Norman at her magisterial best on

DG, possibly my pick of the Barenboim box. As an appendix, Warner offers Berlioz's arrangements, including the famous *Invitation to the Dance*, and a disc of historical recordings going back to 1901, where Maurice Renaud sings Méphistophélès.

Orchestral works

There are faults with all four recordings of the **Symphonie fantastique** in these boxes. Barenboim's is quite exciting even if the playing is a bit too silky in places. Martinon's can be rather limp at times, until building up a head of steam in the finale. The LSO Live account was Sir Colin Davis's fourth recording, but feels quite tame compared with his others, possibly because the engineers were still getting to grips with recording in the Barbican Hall's notoriously difficult acoustic. Gardiner's is the most persuasive, his period-instrument ORR – in its very first recording – bringing out incredible colours, including the use of a serpent parping out the Dies irae in the Witches' Sabbath and the obligato cornet that Berlioz later added to his ball scene. However, in seeking true authenticity, the recording was made in the old hall of the Paris Conservatoire where the work was premiered in 1830 – a dry, boxy sound

which takes getting used to. The Decca box includes a DVD of this performance, which is well worth watching to see these historic instruments in action. Gardiner and the ORR re-recorded the *Fantastique* on tour last autumn, so keep your eyes and ears peeled.

Berlioz tramps the mountains, viola in hand, as Byron's anti-hero in **Harold en Italie**. Tabea Zimmermann offers a warm, sensitive account with Davis, while Gérard Caussé is a touch more characterful with the ORR, leaner of tone. I prefer Gardiner's swifter pacing for the pilgrims in the second movement. By contrast, Leonard Bernstein and the Orchestre National de France, with Donald McInnes as soloist, don't quite cut the mustard on Warner.

Choral works

Moving to the choral and stage works, the Warner box stands on much firmer terrain. **L'enfance du Christ** doesn't appear in Gardiner's Decca box, but is on Warner, recorded in Lyon with an impressive roster of soloists including Anne Sofie von Otter, José Van Dam and Anthony Rolfe Johnson. However, Davis's account is affectionate, the aural equivalent to being wrapped in a warm blanket, with beautiful singing especially from Karen Cargill (the LSO booklet credits the singers incorrectly here). If there were one disc to distil Davis's love for Berlioz, this is it.

I've never been entirely convinced by **Roméo et Juliette**. Despite having some truly memorable moments – mostly orchestral ones such as the Capulet ball, the love scene and the delectable Queen Mab Scherzo – the work doesn't have a convincing narrative arc. Attempts, such as the choreographer Sasha Waltz's to stage it, have fallen flat. That said, all four recordings have much to recommend them. For Warner, Riccardo Muti and the Philadelphia Orchestra are on superb form, muscular strings whirling the listener around the ballroom yet summoning the gossamer textures for Mab. Barenboim's Parisians are a little more circumspect, but the glossy strings are attractive and he has Yvonne Minton as a lovely soloist. Gardiner's love for this score shines through, fruity woodwinds and scintillating percussion in the Mab Scherzo highlighting Berlioz's extraordinary ear for colour.

Three boxes contain the **Requiem** (*Grande Messe des morts*), but – no disrespect to Louis Frémaux and the CBSO on Warner, or to Barenboim and the Orchestre de Paris, both very fine – the palm goes to Davis and the LSO, recorded in St Paul's Cathedral in June 2012. I remember it as a remarkable occasion, scheduled – as only London seems to mismanage – on the very same



Sir John Eliot Gardiner's period-instrument take on Berlioz returns on eight CDs

night that David McVicar's new production of *Les Troyens* opened at Covent Garden. The producer of all these LSO Live Berlioz recordings, James Mallinson, died during preparation of this box and the booklet contains a lovely tribute. Mallinson was a firm believer in SACD surround sound

John Nelson has conducted *Les Troyens* more times than any other conductor alive

(the last six discs in this box are hybrid SACDs) and listening to the thrilling *Dies irae* plunges me back to my seat beneath the Dome, caught in the glorious crossfire between brass groups. This was not just Sir Colin's final recording. It was the last time he conducted the LSO. We still miss him.

La damnation de Faust, his *légende dramatique*, has become one of my favourite Berlioz scores. There is such melodic invention teeming through its pages and some remarkable orchestration too. Warner fields an excellent performance from Lyon,



conducted by Kent Nagano. The soloists are first rate, from José Van Dam's oily Méphisto to Susan Graham's divine Marguerite. Van Dam's Serenade, accompanied by tripping pizzicato strings, is delicious, while you'd be hard pushed to find a lovelier 'D'amour l'ardente flamme' than Graham's. Thomas Moser isn't quite in their league as Faust, but he's ardent and sensitive. Davis has Michele Pertusi as a bluff devil, Enkelejda Shkosa, occasionally tested by Davis's luxuriant tempi, as Marguerite and

Giuseppe Sabbatini – a much underrated tenor in his day – as a plangent Faust.

Barenboim favoured Plácido Domingo for his Berlioz recordings. The Spanish tenor was in his vocal prime but he was never entirely convincing in this sort of French repertoire, especially given his limited top in repertoire where Berlioz often places the tessitura tortuously high. Another bit of miscasting concerns Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau as Méphistophélès – far too baritone, far too mannered in vocal delivery. Thank heaven for Yvonne Minton's luscious Marguerite, beautifully creamy. Gardiner's sinewy ORR relish Berlioz's palette here. The soloists are good rather than outstanding, Jean-Philippe Lafont our mischievous Méphisto, Anne Sofie von Otter as Marguerite and Michael Myers a reliable Faust.

The operas

There are only two competing recordings of **Benvenuto Cellini** in these boxes, with Gregory Kunde singing the eponymous

goldsmith twice. The American tenor is in marginally fresher voice in 2003 for John Nelson on Warner than the 2007 LSO account, but is highly impressive in both. We are presented with two very different versions though. Nelson favours Berlioz's first thoughts – the premiere was famously a disaster after which the composer never worked at the Opéra de Paris again – and is fully vindicated in a dazzling, vivacious reading of this brilliant score. Davis, as in his earlier recording, favoured the revision Berlioz made with substantial cuts. The LSO is weightier than Nelson's Orchestre National de France and Davis's cast, apart from a lively Laura Claycomb as Teresa, doesn't quite match its Warner counterparts, which include Joyce DiDonato as Ascanio and Laurent Naouri as Balducci. *Cellini* is a riot and Nelson captures this spirit more successfully.

Another triumph for John Nelson comes in **Béatrice et Bénédict**. This *opéra comique* is a difficult work to perform: do you include the dialogue or cut it or use a narrator to link the scenes? We get all three solutions here. Nelson includes dialogue and it rattles along to give his recording a great sense of fun and impetus. Davis cuts all dialogue and the result feels a bit filleted. Barenboim employs a narrator – Geneviève Page – which gives the work a clunky feel. Thankfully, Nelson also has the best singers, led by Susan Graham's spunky Béatrice, Sylvia McNair's delightful Héro and Jean-Luc Viala's Bénédict, although Davis has Kenneth Tarver in the male lead, tenderly sung. My feelings (positive and negative) about Domingo, Fischer-Dieskau and Minton from Barenboim's *Faust* apply equally here, but the delight in this Paris set is Ileana Cotrubas's Héro.

It's a clean sweep for Nelson in the Berlioz opera stakes. His recent recording of **Les Troyens**, made in Strasbourg, rightly won Recording of the Year at last year's *Gramophone* Awards and, as I wrote at the time, set a 'thrilling new benchmark for this epic opera'. That's not to decry the LSO Live set which has much to commend it, including Ben Heppner's strapping Énée and the most gorgeously sung Chœur by Peter Mattei. Davis's ladies are powerful: Petra Lang as Cassandre and Michelle DeYoung as Didon, but they can't match Marie-Nicole Lemieux and Joyce DiDonato for Nelson. The entire cast in Strasbourg is fabulous, but is topped by Michael Spyres as a thrilling Énée. Nelson has conducted *Troyens* more times than any other conductor alive and revels in the orchestral and choral details in this miraculous work, never staged complete in Berlioz's lifetime. (John Eliot Gardiner led a terrific *Troyens* at the Châtelet for the 2003



John Nelson's Berlioz forms the core of the Warner set

bicentenary, which was filmed and released on Opus Arte – and also won a *Gramophone* Award. It would have been a worthy pendant to his Decca set.)

Presentation

Unsurprisingly, none of the boxes includes any texts. As regards booklet notes, one man dominates: David Cairns has for long been the 'go-to' Berlioz scholar and the record companies have gone to him for three of these four boxes! His 13-page essay for Warner Classics is splendid, dividing Berlioz's works up into different genres, reflecting the way the discs are arranged. The LSO Live Davis set reprints his excellent concert programme notes. Colin Davis is also the early focus of Cairns's five-page note for the Gardiner box, which begins with an account of the revival of interest in the composer and the part Davis played before moving on to his 'disciples' Gardiner and Norrington (who both played Berlioz under Davis with Chelsea Opera Group). Cairns includes the story of how Gardiner tracked down saxhorns in a private collection owned by an employee of the French railways for his 2003 production of *Troyens* at the Châtelet. Besides Cairns's notes, Nigel Simeone's brief contribution to the Barenboim set – part-historical note, part-review of the recording – is short measure.

Although I've been quite tough on Warner's box, it is remarkable value



for money, especially considering what it would cost to acquire the three John Nelson operas as separate issues. And you do get all of Berlioz – for better or worse. The Barenboim set doesn't represent such value, and I'm less enamoured of the performances. Gardiner is always worth hearing in Berlioz and there's much to be gained from his period instrument revelations. The LSO's 'Berlioz Odyssey' is very special, a lovely tribute to a conductor who did so much to champion the composer. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Hector Berlioz - The Complete Works

Various artists

Warner Classics © (27 discs) 9029 561444-7

Berlioz Odyssey LSO / Sir Colin Davis

LSO Live © (16) LSO0827

Daniel Barenboim: Complete Berlioz Recordings

DG © (10) 483 6412

Berlioz Rediscovered

ORR / Sir John Eliot Gardiner

Decca © (8) (+1 DVD) 483 4687

Yvonne Loriod: Messiaen and so much more

Peter Quantrill on the formidable musicianship of a major post-war French pianist

For all the eccentric ordering of this fascinating set, which proceeds according to neither chronology of works or recordings, the compilers have chosen well in opening with a 1959 album of solo Mozart. By then Yvonne Loriod had been making records for almost 15 years. She was no longer the pianistic darling of Messiaen's class at the Paris Conservatoire, the preternaturally formed keyboard lioness who had excited breathless (un)critical comparisons with Einstein and Toscanini.

Yet here in a programme of fantasias (K394, K396, K397, the great C minor K475 and the Rondo K485) is the Loriod style in excelsis, a harmonious marriage of imposing left-hand strength with the most bewitching *jeu perlé*. Perhaps the most germane point of comparison would be not with elder French contemporaries such as Jeanne-Marie Darré but with the Argentinian wunderkind of the era, Daniel Barenboim. Yet her C minor Fantasia is more finely chiselled, placing less reliance on flamboyant remodelling of Romantic mannerism. Also, her piano is better tuned.

All the recordings in the set were made either side of Loriod's eventual marriage to Messiaen in 1961, his first wife Claire Delbos having at length died in an asylum after years of wretched physical and mental health. Loriod's technique on all of them is a great deal more assured and reliable than the engineering. Acoustic and recording perspective vary drastically from session to session. Edits are very often glaringly obvious. And perhaps only Loriod completists really need the 1962 album of the first four concertos ascribed to Mozart (copies of older men's work orchestrated by the infant prodigy and often his father Leopold) in which she is stodgily accompanied by Pierre Boulez with his Domaine Musical ensemble.

Following hard on the concertos, however, is a carefree return to top form (and to 1959) with a deliciously quicksilver Sonata K331. Peter Donohoe (4/89) paid tribute to Loriod as a teacher who brought him to an understanding of Mozart and Schumann in 'a new and authentic light, quite without a desire to see how "effective" this or that passage could be, the sort of thing that so often goes under the name of "interpretation".' She took on the still-underrated eight Novellettes Op 21 at a time when even master Schumann interpreters played only a couple of them,



Yvonne Loriod (1924-2010): a pianist of wide musical sympathies

though her 1957 mono Véga album is short on atmosphere compared with a stereo remake from the Baden-Baden studios of SWR two years later: it's partly a matter of the airless and windowless acoustic in the earlier version, and microphones that flinch at Loriod's diamantine right-hand articulation. Her hard-hitting and fiercely lit Chopin – the Etudes Op 25 – is altogether more successfully captured in 1963, albeit leaning top-heavily into the right channel.

A harmonious marriage of imposing left-hand strength with the most bewitching *jeu perlé*

The set as a whole pays absorbing testimony to the symbiotic nature of the relationship between pianist and composer, rivalled in history only by the Schumanns: as Roger Muraro marked after Loriod's death in 2010, without her, Messiaen would not have become Messiaen, who himself freely admitted that his student's phenomenal facility and memory inspired from him hitherto undreamt 'eccentricities'. To listen to her B minor Sonata (1963) and her complete *Ibéria* (1957, the first non-native recording) is to hear *Vingt Regards* and the *Catalogue d'Oiseaux* in the making. And yet her Liszt

and Albéniz are gaunt and angular of cast, Gothically striding and brooding through their landscapes like Edgar Allan Poe creations, marginally anticipated in their most dramatic moves by tape pre-echo.

There are other foundational works in Messiaen's piano style here, by Berg and Webern, recorded over Parisian traffic and played for better or worse as though the ink were still wet on their pages, alongside sonatas by Barraqué and Boulez that Loriod herself 'created'. The last half of the set is almost exclusively dedicated to her husband's work, as she was herself in later life (at least in public: she continued practising Bach and Mozart

until her last days), though you'll have to skip forward to CD13 for the gently impressionistic *Préludes* which formed her first encounter with his music. Turn back to CD7 for the *Visions de l'Amen* for which, freshly awestruck by her playing, Messiaen incorporated into the first part 'the rhythmic difficulties, the chord clusters, everything which is velocity, charm and sound quality', while chauvinistically reserving for himself 'the principal melodic material, the thematic elements, everything which demands emotion and power.'

More spacious and considered than their 1951 premiere recording, this 1962 account was reissued on CD by Véga's founder, Lucien Adès, along with much else here. Only in the case of the badly congested *Turangalila-Symphonie* conducted by another Messiaen pupil, Maurice Le Roux, is it a shame that the opportunity has been passed up to make fresh remasterings. In a hissy transfer from LPs, hitherto unavailable complete on CD, the 1959 *Catalogue* is a major act of restitution and, along with the Albéniz and Liszt items, the most compelling reason to acquire this uneven if lavishly annotated box (retailing for about £36). **G**

THE RECORDING

'Yvonne Loriod: The Complete Véga Recordings 1956-1963'

Decca **M** **13** 481 7069

BOX-SET *Round-up*

Rob Cowan offers a personal round-up of some worthwhile CD bargains

When it comes to nominating a default position for *gemütlich* string playing in the latter half of the 20th century, **Willi Boskovsky**, concertmaster of the Vienna Philharmonic from 1936 to 1979 and long-standing conductor of the Vienna New Year's Day Concerts, fits the bill to perfection. And while Boskovsky's discography is by no means restricted to the Decca label, Decca captured his genial and persuasive style both in chamber music and, most famously, a plethora of Strauss family masterpieces. Also, one mustn't forget his solo work in the music of Richard Strauss under the likes of Krauss (*Ein Heldenleben*) and Karajan (*Also sprach Zarathustra*), legendary recordings included in this set and it's good that we have duplicate recordings by members of the Vienna Octet (of which Boskovsky was leader), including Beethoven's Septet, represented three times, the first from 1948 (a first CD release), the last from 1959 whereas the middle version (1954) strikes me as the most spontaneous of the three.

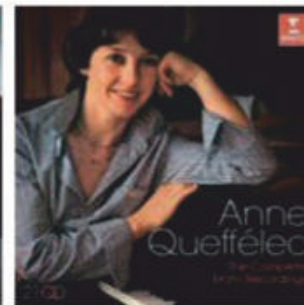
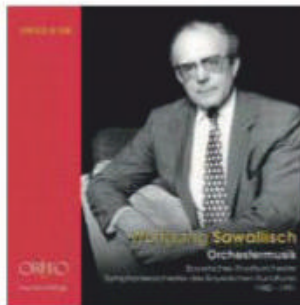
Schubert's Octet was also recorded three times and there are numerous duplications among the various Strauss family waltzes and polkas, etc, sometimes tracing a subtle transformation in the Philharmonic's playing style. I'm thinking in particular of Johann Strauss II's *Waldmeister* Overture (we're offered versions from 1957, 1968 and 1975) where the 1957 account still retains elements from the VPO of Clemens Krauss's heyday, with audible if subtle portamentos. Also of note, the New Year's Day 1979 concert recorded live, the first commercial use of Decca's proprietary PCM digital system.

There are Mozart marches and dances in famously elegant renditions, orchestral works by sundry composers (some recorded with London orchestras) and two DVDs of excerpted New Year's Day performances (in colour and black and white) as well as a documentary where Boskovsky reminisces interestingly about some of the great conductors he played under. Tully Potter's notes are a pleasure to read and while I wouldn't want to pass on my Strauss family recordings featuring Krauss, Kleiber (Erich and Carlos), Reiner, Szell, Karajan, Honeck or Walter (to name but a few), Boskovsky's winsome manner of performing is always a joy to encounter.



Wolfgang Sawallisch's conducting style was distinguished by clarity, directness, a sense of line and a natural empathy with whatever musical style he was dealing with. Orfeo's collection of mostly orchestral recordings (1980-91) with the Bavarian State and Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestras is entirely characteristic. The BRSO recordings feature a well-paced and beautifully sung Brahms *German Requiem* (Margaret Price and Thomas Allen), robust accounts of the two Weber symphonies and a compelling disc of orchestral pieces by Hans Pfitzner. The State Orchestra selections are largely devoted to Bruckner symphonies – Nos 1, 5, 6 and 9 are on the agenda – with the Fifth and Sixth being especially fine, bracing in the manner of, say, Eduard van Beinum. The State Orchestra trawl also includes a satisfying programme of overtures, the highlights of which are Beethoven's *Leonore* No 2, Brahms's *Tragic* and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. With Sawallisch honest reportage of the notes on the page was paramount. Although not always inspiring, he was never misleading, and this set provides impressive evidence of why he was so highly rated. Good sound throughout.

Exemplary chamber music playing arrives via a box of the **Juilliard Quartet's** RCA recordings that nicely compliments their Epic recordings that I covered in the May 2018 issue. Granted that in terms of exquisite nuancing the 1957 mono versions of Mozart's Quartets Nos 14 and 19 don't quite level with their 1962 stereo Epic successors, but a Haydn coupling from the same period (Op 74 No 1 and Op 71 No 1) is typically dapper and a first ever release of Beethoven's Second and Eighth Quartets from the same year (in stereo this time) shows the Juilliard well en route to the energized, pristine Beethoven style of their middle period. Much else in the set has already been released by either Testament or RCA themselves, including late Beethoven, Dvořák, Debussy, Ravel, Berg, Webern, Carter, William Schuman



and Schubert (a haunting *Death and the Maiden*). Recommended most definitely, but make sure to also acquire the Epic set, if you haven't already done so.

Hearing these Juilliard sessions again has proved quite a tonic and likewise 'The Complete Erato Recordings' of that most sensitive of pianists **Anne Queffélec**, who has just turned 71 and whose considerable artistry can be sampled on YouTube, including a piece she plays in this particular set, Handel's Minuet in G minor. I've long treasured her Scarlatti recital, her account of the gently winding B minor Sonata Kk27 being among the finest versions on piano. Queffélec captures to perfection the mercurial elements in Chopin's Scherzos while her Schubert duet recordings with Imogen Cooper (including the F minor Fantasia and the Grand Duo) are surely as compelling as any. A breezy Beethoven Triple Concerto with violinist Pierre Amoyal and cellist Frédéric Lodéon under Armin Jordan captures the work's 'feel-good' element and there are deft, sweetly expressive accounts of Mendelssohn's piano trios (same collaborators) and Fauré's two violin sonatas (with Amoyal again). Ravel is represented by two fine recordings of *Miroirs* and *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Add typically insightful renditions of music by Liszt, Bach, Poulenc, Debussy, Satie and Dutilleux (especially treasurable) and you have the basis of a collection that should yield many hours of profound pleasure. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

'Willi Boskovsky: Master of the Waltz - Complete Decca Recordings'

Decca © (50 discs) + ② DVD 483 2517

'Wolfgang Sawallisch: Orchestermusik'

Orfeo © ⑧ C957 188L

'Juilliard String Quartet: The Complete RCA Recordings 1957-60'

RCA Red Seal ① ① 19075 863421-2

'Anne Queffélec: the Complete Erato recordings'

Erato © (21 discs) 9029 554278-8

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



The art of Gregor Piatigorsky

A fairly large proportion of RCA's **Gregor Piatigorsky: The Art of the Cello** has already been reissued on CD more than once, in 'The Heifetz-Piatigorsky Concerts', 'Jascha Heifetz: The Complete Album Collection' (and its brown-cased predecessors) and 'Jascha Heifetz: The Complete Stereo Collection', and as various single releases. Not that I'm complaining. So many of these performances set standards: Mozart's G minor String Quintet, Mendelssohn's Octet, Brahms's String Sextet in G as well as various recordings that were not part of the original Heifetz-Piatigorsky concerts sequence, such as the complete string trios of Beethoven (stereo and mono), where the instrumental interplay between Heifetz, Piatigorsky and viola player William Primrose is both expressive and animated. The Kogan-Barshai-Rostropovich trio comes close, but not that close. Years ago when I conducted a public interview with the great producer Jack Pfeiffer, Jack brought along significant and often amusing snippets of rehearsal of these trios, and it's a pity that they couldn't have been included in this new set.

These performances promote a standard of string playing that's unique on disc

Even if you'd want alternative recordings to place beside them, these remarkable performances promote a standard of string playing that is unique on disc – even performances such as that of Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence*, which despite being headstrong and occasionally rough-edged is extraordinarily passionate.

And the rest? Well, there are numerous duplicate performances that shed significant light on Piatigorsky's development over a span of 30-odd years. Generally speaking, as with Heifetz, Piatigorsky's later playing (from the 1960s – his best) relates new-found levels of expressive subtlety. Take the two versions of the Dvořák Cello Concerto: the first, with the excellent Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, from 1946;

the second, with Charles Munch and the Boston SO, from 1960. The later recording scores on numerous counts, not least added flexibility, an expanded range of tonal colouring and greater expressive refinement. The earlier version is brilliant, of course, but without the same degree of meaningful introspection, especially in the slower music. Under Munch you get the best of both worlds.

In the case of Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*, a work that earned Piatigorsky praise from the composer himself, the issue of choosing is complicated by the fact that the earlier version (from 1941) features the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra under a noted Straussian, Fritz Reiner, and while Munch's Boston recording (1953) is on a lower rung in that respect, Piatigorsky's playing there is just as eloquent, maybe marginally more so in 'Don Quixote's Death'.

As to Brahms's Double Concerto, the first version is with Nathan Milstein, with Reiner conducting the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra of Philadelphia (1951), and the later one is with Heifetz and the RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra under Alfred Wallenstein (1960). Reiner's extra urgency is obvious from the start, but on the later version the richness of Piatigorsky's tone as recorded in stereo is an added bonus; and regarding violinist partners: Milstein (a friend and playing colleague of the cellist from way back) is virtually Heifetz's equal.

In the Brahms sonatas, a recording of the Second with pianist Ralph Berkowitz (1946/47) is taut, impassioned and dramatic, whereas a 1966 recording with Arthur Rubinstein finds Piatigorsky sounding relatively low key while the pianist is sometimes overwhelmingly prominent. A superior partnership dates from the previous year, when Piatigorsky joined Rudolf Firkušný for the Chopin and Prokofiev sonatas in playing that abounds in distinctive details from both artists (though both works are also represented by memorable earlier recordings with Berkowitz). There's also a coupling of Mendelssohn's Cello Sonata No 2 and the Strauss Sonata with Leonard

Pennario (an admirable fixture at the Heifetz-Piatigorsky concerts) from 1965-66 that's virtually as good. Then again, we mustn't forget such famous recordings as Walton's Cello Concerto and Bloch's *Schelomo* as well as Saint-Saëns's First Concerto and Bruch's *Kol nidrei*.

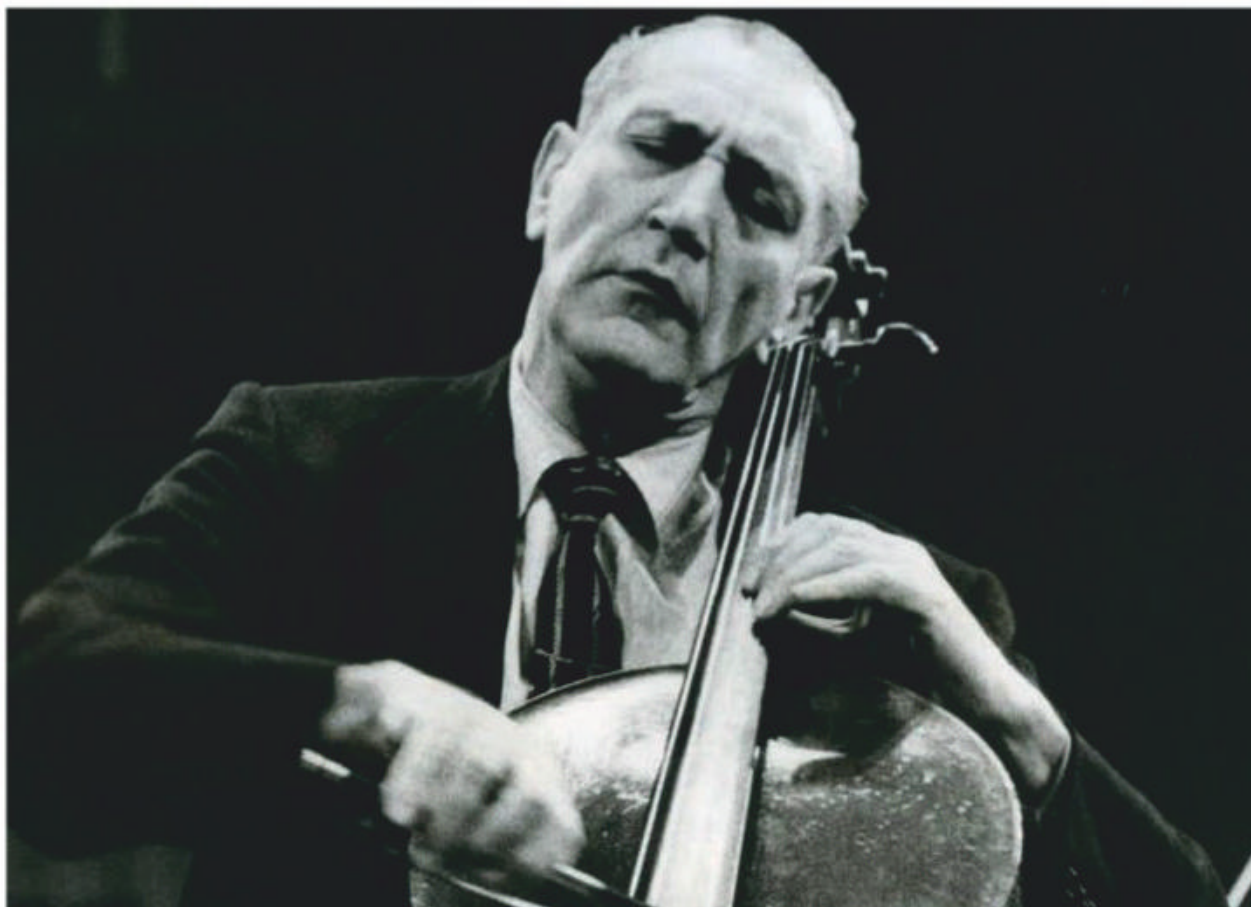
Rarities abound. The three sets of Beethoven variations with composer-pianist Lukas Foss are among the finest ever recorded, and the same CD includes music by Stravinsky, Debussy, Busoni and Foss himself. An earlier version of the Prokofiev Sonata appears on the same disc as Bach's Viola da Gamba Sonata in D, BWV1028; and there are Hindemith, Barber and Shostakovich cello sonatas plus a whole range of shorter pieces, among which one of the most beautiful is David Popper's arrangement of the Melody in F by Anton Rubinstein. The Rubinstein Romance in E flat is another highlight, and there are two songs with contralto Marian Anderson, one of the best examples on record of a singer and string player matching in tone. It's a pity that RCA couldn't have borrowed Brahms's First Sonata with Rubinstein and Beethoven's Second Sonata with Schnabel from Warner Classics.

The excellent notes by Terry King are full of interesting facts, and the documentation is excellent, not least a photo reproduction of the laudatory note that Strauss sent to Piatigorsky regarding his performances of *Don Quixote*. The admirable packaging features 'original sleeve' – and album note – reproductions, always a boon to those with fond memories of vinyl. Piatigorsky rates alongside various of his contemporaries – Feuermann, Casals, Gendron, Fournier, Navarra, Maréchal and a handful of others – as one of the finest cellists of the last century, and this set is a handsome and highly desirable tribute to him.

THE RECORDING



'Gregor Piatigorsky: The Art of the Cello'
Gregor Piatigorsky et al
RCA © (36 discs)
19075 83213-2



Gregor Piatigorsky (1903-76) in the late 1960s, when his recordings relate 'new-found levels of expressive subtlety'

Schnabel plumbs the depths in Schubert

Having already treated us to Artur Schnabel's benchmark complete set of the Beethoven piano sonatas (12/16; though rather irritatingly omitting the *Diabelli* Variations and other solo works recorded around the same time), Warner Classics now turns its attention to Schnabel's equally remarkable **Schubert** recordings. Pride of place must go to the three big Sonatas D850, D959 and D960. In his revealing booklet notes, André Tubeuf interestingly mentions sessions that included the Sonatas D845, D894 and D958, none of which I can recall having come across. Were these ever recorded, or recorded but never issued? Clues, anyone? As to the sonatas we do have, Schnabel's signature spontaneity and mastery of musical rests is everywhere in evidence, his eloquent voicing (at times bordering on operatic) especially noticeable in the *Con moto* second movement of D850. And there's his sense of play. There's drama, too, at the unstill centre of D959's *Andantino*, and the ruffled calm that greets so much of the first movement of the great B flat Sonata, D960. The moments musicaux and the eight impromptus are included, though the recently discovered 1942 RCA recording of the D899 set (included in RCA's own Schnabel collection: 88985 38971-2) strikes me as marginally superior to this 1950 set. Recordings of various duet works with Schnabel's son Karl Ulrich and Lieder with his wife, Therese Behr-Schnabel, heard

somewhere past her vocal prime though still in fine fettle musically speaking, attest to Schnabel's skills as a duet partner, while the *Trout* Quintet with Pro Arte Quartet members plus double bassist Claude Hobday is pure delight from start to finish. The transfers are the finest we've yet had.

THE RECORDING



Schubert
Artur Schnabel et al
Warner Classics © ⑤
9029 56337-6



Cherkassky fans the flames

While Schnabel soared skywards towards the musical firmament, the Russian-born virtuoso **Shura Cherkassky** was invariably at his best when in a mischievous mood. With Cherkassky no two performances were ever alike; he was truly an interpretative 'ideas man', and this recent Profil collection, which includes some of his finest recordings, both studio and live, showcases this great keyboard colourist to impressive effect. The live trawl includes Schumann's First Piano Sonata and his Fantasy in C. Stereo recordings of Liszt's *Hungarian Fantasy* (with the Berlin Philharmonic under Herbert von Karajan) and a one-time favourite coupling of the Grieg and Schumann concertos (with the LPO under Sir Adrian Boult) display dexterous playing with a lyrical slant, though not especially wilful. DG mono recordings of the first two Tchaikovsky concertos (with the Berlin Philharmonic under Leopold Ludwig and

Richard Kraus respectively) are distinctive, the finale of No 2 (a work presented in Siloti's abridged edition) a musical jack-in-the-box that has probably never been equalled since. Also included are concertos by Liszt (No 1), Prokofiev (No 2) and Shostakovich (No 1), various solo works (some captured in recital) and a disc of early recordings, including Rachmaninov's Cello Sonata with Marcel Hubert. These are good transfers.

THE RECORDING



'Shura Cherkassky: Piano Masterpieces'
Shura Cherkassky et al
Profil © ⑩ PH18037

Szell with Toscanini's NBC orchestra

What with Sony Classical's recent bumper-box tribute to **George Szell** (11/18) and the two Szell boxes of live recordings on West Hill Radio Archives (9/08), which include Szell's debut concert with the Cleveland Orchestra, not to mention CDs that the Cleveland Orchestra have put out themselves, we're well served for recorded evidence of this great conductor's estimable art. The latest to arrive is a thrilling 1941 concert with Toscanini's NBC Symphony Orchestra, where Szell offers repertoire that Toscanini himself never programmed with the orchestra, including *Carnival* (super fast and with some warming portamentos) and a group of four Slavonic dances by Dvořák – the last in the sequence of dances, Op 72 No 7, is about as brilliant as any, bar Václav Talich's live 1939 Czech Philharmonic Orchestra version in Nazi-occupied Prague (Supraphon). Also included is the world premiere performance of Szell's highly dramatic orchestration of Smetana's First String Quartet, *From My Life*, a reading that in terms of raw spontaneity surely betters the conductor's two Cleveland versions. Smetana also tops and tails the programme, which opens with a virtuoso Overture to *The Bartered Bride* and closes to an especially flexible account of 'Vltava' from *Má vlast*. Andrew Rose's XR remastering grants the sound both presence and clarity, and as this is a prime sampling of Szell 'off the leash', so to speak, you need look no further.

THE RECORDING



'Szell Conducts Czech Music'
NBC Symphony Orchestra /
George Szell
Pristine Audio © PASC543

Classics RECONSIDERED



Geraint Lewis and **David Threasher** return to Gramophone's 2001 Recording of the Year, Richard Hickox's Chandos recording of Vaughan Williams's *A London Symphony*



Vaughan Williams

Symphony No 2, 'A London Symphony'
London Symphony Orchestra / Richard Hickox
Chandos

It was during the summer of 1911 that George Butterworth first suggested to Vaughan Williams that he should write a purely orchestral symphony. VW dug out some sketches he had made for a symphonic poem about London, while at the same time deriving fruitful inspiration from HG Wells's 1908 novel, *Tono-Bungay*. VW subsequently dedicated the score to Butterworth's memory. Over the next two decades or so, the work underwent three revisions (including much judicious pruning) and was published twice (in 1920 and 1936). In his compelling 1941 recording with the Cincinnati SO, Eugene Goossens employed the 1920 version, which adds about three minutes of music to

that definitive 1936 'revised edition'. Now Richard Hickox at long last gives us the chance to hear VW's original, hour-long canvas – and riveting listening it makes too!

Whereas the opening movement is as we know it today, the ensuing, expanded *Lento* acquires an intriguingly mournful, even world-weary demeanour. Unnervingly, the ecstatic full flowering of that glorious E major *Largamente* idea, first heard at fig F in the final revision, never materialises, and the skies glower menacingly thereafter. Towards the end of the Scherzo comes a haunting episode that Arnold Bax was particularly sad to see cut ('a mysterious passage of strange and fascinating cacophony' was how he described it in his autobiography, *Farewell, My Youth* [Scholar Press: 1992]). The finale, too, contains a wealth of additional material, most strikingly a liturgical theme

of wondrous lyrical beauty and, in the epilogue, a gripping paragraph which both looks back to the work's introduction as well as forward to the first movement of *A Pastoral Symphony*. Sprawling it may be, but VW's epic conception evinces a prodigal inventiveness, poetry, mystery and vitality that do not pall with repeated hearings, and, time and again, I find myself marvelling at just how hugely influential its intoxicatingly colourful orchestral palette must have been on Holst's *The Planets* and even Bax's wartime tone poems.

Hickox and the LSO respond with an unquenchable spirit, generous flexibility and tender affection that suit VW's admirably ambitious inspiration to a T, and Chandos's sound is big and bold to match. Quite simply, an essential purchase for anyone remotely interested in British music. **Andrew Achenbach (7/01)**

Geraint Lewis I must have come under VW's spell at about 11 or 12 and I will never forget his centenary concert a few years later at the Llandaff Festival in 1972, with Sir Adrian Boult conducting the Sixth Symphony and Ursula Vaughan Williams as guest of honour. By then I was already haunted by Boult's 1952 recording of *A London Symphony* as reissued on a Decca Eclipse LP with a photo on the front of Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where VW and his first wife Adeline lived from 1905 until 1929. But that was a very different *London Symphony* to the one we're reconsidering here ...

David Threasher Yes, it's almost a different world, isn't it? We're used to the familiar sounds of the city at night, the river and the chimes of Big

Ben but there's a whole section – in reality revealed for the first time by Richard Hickox on this magnificent recording – that takes us into another world, far removed from the pre-war, post-Edwardian London that VW is, in effect, depicting for us in the familiar version of his symphony.

GL You put your finger there on the one feature which makes this Hickox recording unique: he was granted permission by Ursula Vaughan Williams to make this one-off recording of the original version of the score as first heard in 1913. It was therefore a pre-war work – and in fact the only existing score was posted to Germany and got lost. Only by reconstructing the score from the parts used at the first performance did the piece survive at all.

DT That was the version used at the first few performances – despite the score having gone astray – but VW revised it for the first time only a few years afterwards, and that was the version that was initially published; and although the first movement was virtually untouched, already he's excised whole chunks from the other three. I managed to find that intermediate version in score (it's recently been recorded by the BBC SO and Martyn Brabbins – Hyperion, 11/17), which is far closer to the version we all know. There are only a few sections where he 'tightens up' the structure for the later version. But between 1913 and 1920 he had second thoughts about quite substantial sections of the slow movement, scherzo and finale. Do you think his second or even third thoughts are an improvement?

The London Symphony Orchestra of course have had this music in their bones for decades, and Hickox was one of the leading conductors of British music of this era. And Chandos captured it all in superb sound – you really get a sense of space around it all, thanks to the acoustic of All Saints, Tooting, which was once such a favourite orchestral recording venue.

GL The LSO, Chandos and Hickox were in the process of recording what was gradually emerging as a cycle-to-be. It was Hickox, after all, who'd given the first complete set of the nine symphonies as a cycle of public concerts at the Barbican, with Ursula Vaughan Williams involved. They had only recorded the Fifth, in 1997, before taping this *London Symphony* in December 2000 – the release of which garnered all sorts of awards, including, of course, the coveted *Gramophone* Recording of the Year in 2001. Most of the rest followed shortly afterwards but Nos 7 and 9 were unrecorded when Hickox died – in Swansea of all places – in 2008, aged only 60. He would surely have gone on to record the revised *London* as well, which I was fortunate enough to hear him conduct in concert in Cardiff once.

DT I think this recording deserves its 'classic' status – despite being less than 20 years old – for its unique status and for the high quality of the music-making throughout the symphony and in the coupling, *The Banks of Green Willow* by the man who had encouraged VW to compose the symphony in the first place, George Butterworth. Finding alternative versions of familiar works is often rewarding but there doesn't seem to be a need to record this edition again now, while there clearly is a desire for further recordings of the 'canonic' nine to stand alongside the older classics by the likes of Boult, Handley, Previn, Andrew Davis and so on.

GL Martyn Brabbins's emerging cycle on Hyperion is certainly one to watch and Manze and Elder still have some to come. But for me Sir Adrian's 1952 version, despite the wavering sound, remains unsurpassed – with VW and Ursula present – and he'd lived through every stage of the score's evolution. An encapsulation of the pre-war London conducted by an Edwardian who was there. One of my desert-island discs – and, maybe like the Hickox, an ideal candidate for the vinyl revival? **G**

GL I think so, very much in fact; but what this marvellous recording allows us to do is sit at VW's desk and look over his shoulder as he prunes very deftly. There are some glorious moments and whole passages that get the blue pencil treatment – he was an absolute master of the art of precis! He did, indeed, leave the opening movement untouched, and it doesn't contain an unnecessary bar, to my mind. But with the other movements he does remove many trees so that the wood can be seen properly. He doesn't add anything but his cutting creates a masterpiece out of a potentially great work – quite an achievement.

DT Andrew Achenbach was certainly excited to hear the extra music and he praised it unstintingly. It shows just how unsentimental VW was about his material; many other composers might have been happier to lose a limb or a child than cut more than a quarter of an hour of such inspiration! I feel that it broadens the scope as well as the scale of the symphony: Ursula may have been dismissive of the 'bad hymn tune' in

the finale but Bax keenly felt the loss of the 'strange and fascinating cacophony' from the scherzo. There are moments that bring the work's sound world closer to Ravel, and on hearing that section from the scherzo you certainly get the feeling that Tilbury Docks have been left far behind.

GL You're right – AA, like so many of us, was thrilled at the tantalising swathes of 'new' music suddenly made available. It's about 16 minutes and thus a quarter of the original length. But he did something very similar, at the very same time, to the *Tallis Fantasia* – and having studied that process I'd say his instinct was right in both cases. As it happens, I think one major strength of Hickox's conducting is that it's ideally suited to the more discursive, rhapsodic nature of the 1913 Symphony.

DT You've already mentioned a favourite recording of yours, of the familiar revised version. But isn't it a good job that the chance to record the original version fell to such a committed group of musicians?

Books



Nigel Simeone welcomes a guide to Stravinsky's Rite of Spring:

'The most original chapter looks at The Rite's enduring impact on later generations of musicians'



Andrew Mellor on a study of the English choral tradition and its roots:

'The author is excellent when recounting the specifics of choral style and the emergence of alternatives to the King's approach'

The Rite of Spring

The Music of Modernity

By Gillian Moore

Head of Zeus, HB, 288pp, £18.99

ISBN 978-1-786-69682-3



There is a substantial literature on Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, from major theoretical studies such as

Pieter C van den Toorn's *Stravinsky and the Rite of Spring: The Beginnings of a Musical Language* (OUP: 1987) to more compact guides to the work, of which Peter Hill's *Cambridge Music Handbook* (2000) is particularly valuable. More recently, Boosey & Hawkes and the Paul Sacher Foundation published a hefty collection of essays in *Avatar of Modernity: The Rite of Spring Reconsidered* (2013), issued at the same time as facsimiles of the autograph orchestral score and version for piano four hands. Major general studies of Stravinsky – particularly Richard Taruskin's *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions* (OUP: 1996) – also have a great many important things to say about the work, and the evidence for the original ballet has been minutely examined in Millicent Hodson's book *Nijinsky's Crime Against Grace* (Pendragon: 1996). And so it goes on: *The Rite of Spring* is music that has been written about extensively – analysed, dissected and examined from any number of different perspectives, including the numerous comments (reliable or otherwise) on the work by the composer himself in his published conversations with Robert Craft.

What Gillian Moore offers is something rather different from these earlier books. Hers is a thoroughly approachable study of *The Rite* which can readily be enjoyed by readers without technical knowledge (the only music examples are a few pages from Stravinsky's manuscripts) but who are seeking a deeper understanding of this pivotal work in the history of music. It is in the publisher's 'Landmark Library', a series written by specialists intended for 'a wider

non-specialist readership' – and Moore's *Rite of Spring* fulfils this brief admirably. Now Director of Music at the Southbank Centre, Moore was formerly Education Officer for the London Sinfonietta and then Head of Education at the Southbank Centre. She writes with an engaging enthusiasm that is clearly the result of an extremely detailed knowledge of the work, and her book draws on some of the best earlier writing on *The Rite* as well as providing a refreshing new evaluation of it. As might be expected, it includes substantial chapters on the work's origins, on the notorious first night at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on May 29, 1913, and on what actually was 'new' about its musical language. The 'Listening Guide' is a blow-by-blow prose account of the score which may well be useful for those coming to the work for the first time.

Moore's most original chapter is 'The Aftershocks', which looks at the work's enduring impact on later generations of musicians. These include comments from the composer George Benjamin and several conductors (Esa-Pekka Salonen, Marin Alsop, Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, Vladimir Jurowski), but more interesting is Moore's delving into the wider influence of *The Rite*, on jazz musicians such as Charlie Parker, Alice Coltrane and Ornette Coleman, and on the irrepressible Frank Zappa, 'a self-confessed Stravinsky obsessive', as she puts it. The pervasive presence of *The Rite* in the cinema goes far beyond *Fantasia*, though, as Moore admits, 'for generations of people, *The Rite of Spring* means dinosaurs' – it certainly did for me after I was taken to see *Fantasia* as a child. But Moore makes some interesting points about the influence of the music on film scores such as Bernard Herrmann's *Psycho* and Elmer Bernstein's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and, above all, in the music of John Williams. Moore's focus is primarily on the music rather than the ballet, but she ends with a fascinating discussion of the history of *The Rite* on stage and some of the different approaches taken by a century of choreographers.

The book is generously illustrated with plenty of well-chosen photographs, facsimiles of Stravinsky's manuscripts, colour reproductions of Roerich's original sets (strongly evocative of ancient pagan Russia) and a terrific still from the dinosaur fight in *Fantasia*. For anyone wanting a lively and enjoyable introduction to *The Rite of Spring*, this new book could well be the ideal place to start: it's a fine example of knowledge lightly worn, presented with animation and zest.

Nigel Simeone

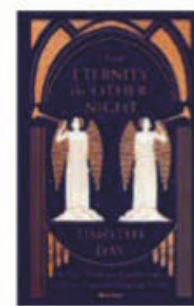
I Saw Eternity the Other Night

King's College, Cambridge and an English Singing Style

By Timothy Day

Allen Lane, HB, 416pp, £25

ISBN 978-0-241-35218-2



Time's up for lazy mythologising on the 'English choral tradition'. Webcasting is unwittingly

proving that some ecclesiastical choirs aren't as heavenly as they sound on pristine recordings and pre-prepared broadcasts. And now we have this thorough study from Timothy Day, which tees up its account of the invention of said tradition in the 1900s with some hard facts about the fallow centuries that went before, during which Choral Evensong throughout the land was often half-sung – if sung at all – by a handful of incompetent boys, one wobbly octogenarian and a goat. Day must be congratulated for revealing that the 'unbroken tradition of 500 years' is a fiction.

It was also astonishing to read – during the week in December when the issue of females (not) singing in the most famous choral foundation of all reared its head – that some big figures in the world of 19th-century cathedral music lamented the fact that they were forced to use boys'



A colourised image from the original production of *The Rite of Spring* at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées in Paris, 1913, with costumes by Nicholas Roerich

voices over women's for no better reason than availability. *I Saw Eternity the Other Night* uses the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, as its chief case study but the book goes big on details elsewhere in the centuries before King's, and everywhere else, got their acts together. So thorough is the detail and research here that you occasionally wish some of it had been edited out and that we could get to the main course a little sooner.

The meaty conclusion that follows is that the sound of the choir at King's and particularly its top line – 'unfruity, lofty yet unintimidating, simple in its intricacy, modest in its richness, weightless, luminous, graceful' according to one listener – was formed in the image of Boris Ord and David Willcocks and that its gradual honing (and the resulting need for purer, better lower voices) led to the use of undergraduates for lower parts from the 1960s. That, in turn, brought about the proliferation of pure-voiced adult groups from the Monteverdi Choir to Voces8; it was the late 20th-century idea of King's choir as a recording, concert-giving and ambassadorial institution that led to other colleges and cathedrals providing similar opportunities to girls and women.

It's a persuasive argument that the King's sound is a distinctly English one born of

post-war reserve and stifled poetry. We learn that Ord was a sadist weirdo who loved opera and that Willcocks was a reserved, repressed war hero who had no time for vocal grandstanding, instead prioritising detail and blend.

Day is excellent when recounting the specifics of choral style and the emergence of alternatives to the King's approach at York Minster, Westminster Cathedral, New College, Oxford, and up the road at St John's. He gives us careful and deeply considered commentary on how the latter choirs came to exert their own influence. His ears are sharp but he never rests on his analyses alone, citing countless others who listen as acutely as he does. The journalist and internet-evensong-addict in me would have liked more critical appraisal of the day-to-day sound of the King's choir now, and some exploration of whether those other ensembles have the upper hand in an age when quality is linked to stylistic flexibility. Webcasting shows the King's choir to have some arguably bad habits while some of its own ideals have failed to adapt or reinvent themselves. Day cites George Guest's pioneering of 'more than one style of singing' at St John's College, something carried forward by Robinson, Hill and Nethsingha that has surely proved more musically rewarding in the long term.

This is a separate study altogether, perhaps, but it would illuminate all of Day's painstaking research and astute societal observation even more to have used the distinctive sounds of, say, Liverpool's two cathedral choirs as a laboratory control (where both top lines are sung by state-school boys and girls, many with with regional accents). Like the more direct, intense and emotionally disciplined sound at St John's, the urgent and expressive yet still tight and blended choirs at some cathedrals in industrial northern England seem to reflect the country they are singing in now much like the King's sound did (and perhaps still does) that of the 1950s and '60s (spoken introductions to King's webcasts suggest that the singers come from a narrow social strata).

Perhaps that's missing the point. Even if Day proves that the King's tradition is far from eternal, we can accept the idea of eternity as a non-musical allure, which lies behind the author's excellent analysis of the draw of Choral Evensong in a secular age and the Church of England's quasi-agnostic harbouring of that appeal. If I wanted even more from this book, that only underlines how important and revealing I found what it does contain.

Andrew Mellor

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances

Rachmaninov's final orchestral work recalls the sounds of Old Russia from the vantage point of the composer's American exile. **Rob Cowan** assesses the available recordings

In my beginning is my end.' TS Eliot's haunting words at the start of 'East Coker' (the second of his *Four Quartets*) remind me that the first of these *Symphonic Dances*, Rachmaninov's last and perhaps greatest work, lovingly quotes his First Symphony, which failed at its premiere, an allusion that at the time – 1941 – would have been known to very few. The wider public had to wait a good few years before the symphony was revealed in all its youthful glory and we could knowingly glance back at this later work with a sigh of recognition: 'so that's where the sense of longing comes from'. By coincidence, Eliot's poem and Rachmaninov's *Dances* were completed in the same year. But the time travel element doesn't end there.

The *Dances* simultaneously inhabit the 'old' and 'new' worlds, being 'Old Russian' to the core but with a filmic element that unmistakably reflects its place of birth. Furthermore, Rachmaninov uses an alto saxophone, a rare occurrence with Russians at the time excepting Glazunov, who as it happened had conducted the disastrous premiere of Rachmaninov's First Symphony and who wrote a Saxophone Concerto and a Saxophone Quartet, both works, like the *Dances*, tinged with melancholy.

The *Symphonic Dances* was the only major work that Rachmaninov composed entirely in America. When Michael Stewart wrote his excellent *Gramophone* Collection survey of recordings back in July 1994 the roll call of versions, piano and orchestral, was far less than is available now for orchestra alone, which is why I'm restricting myself only to orchestral options – and even then only to a judicious selection. Otherwise I'd barely have space for gnomonic references,

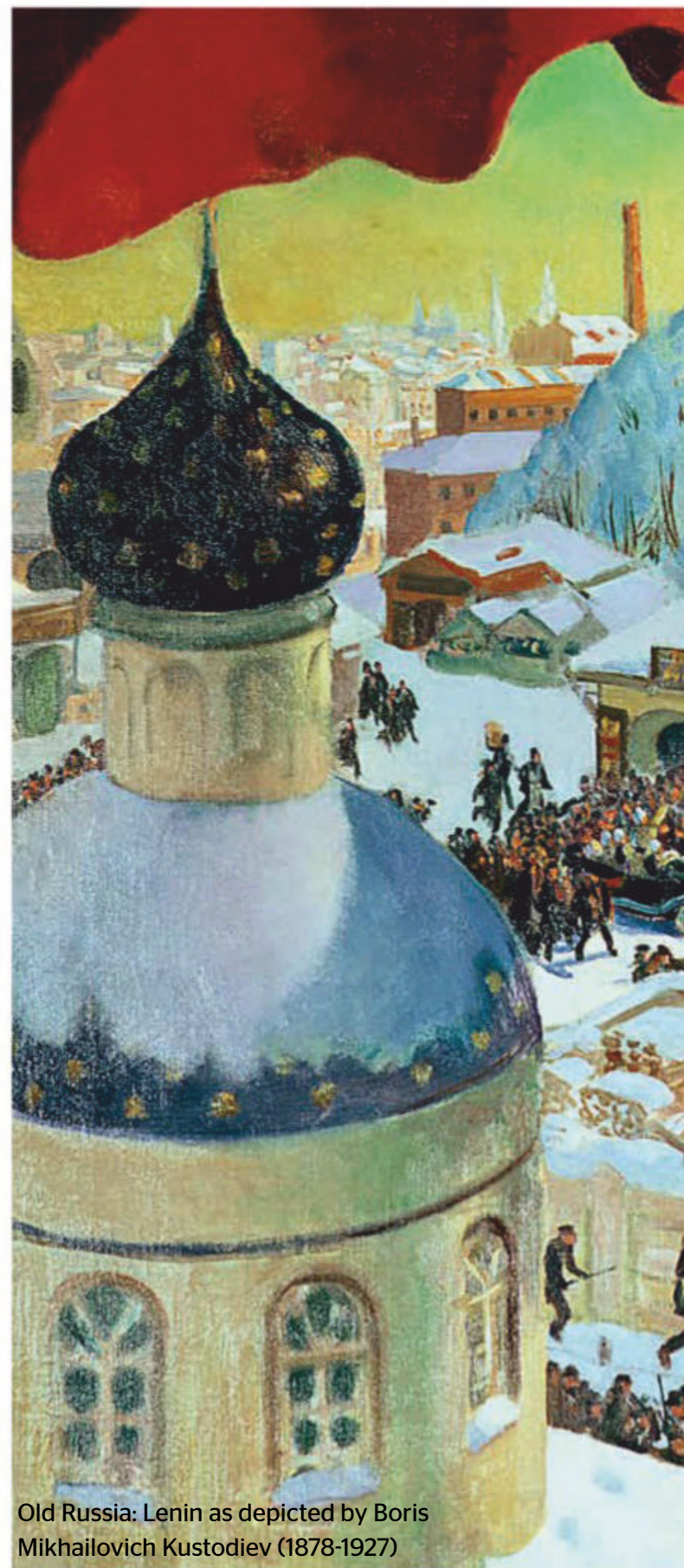
if that. Besides, there's now one recently released historic game-changer that alters the way we hear the work; but more about that below.

FIRST ARRIVALS

Rachmaninov dedicated the *Dances* to the Philadelphia Orchestra and its conductor at the time, Eugene Ormandy, who gave the premiere. We're told that Ormandy didn't take to the work and that Rachmaninov wasn't too keen on the way he performed it. **Dimitri Mitropoulos** caught his ear more favourably and, thanks to Ward Marston, we now have access to Mitropoulos's 1942 New York Philharmonic Symphony broadcast, hitherto unpublished and – in the absence of the premiere performance – the earliest complete recording of the work to have come down to us.

The context of its release is a fascinating set in which also we hear the composer himself demonstrating a large proportion of his then fresh-minted masterpiece on the piano (all three dances are represented), with Ormandy listening close by. What we learn is of immense value: that the opening pages should be kept steady, for example, and that the *tempo rubato* marking over the opening of the darkly waltzing second movement should be just that, elastic in its phrasing.

Mitropoulos's performance is muscular and forceful, though the expressive centre of the first dance soars, the New York strings the equal of any in the world, then or now. Mitropoulos additionally incorporates piano-writing at fig 7 which has since been included as a 'composer's amendment' in the Boosey & Hawkes study score. Erich Leinsdorf, Ormandy and



Old Russia: Lenin as depicted by Boris Mikhailovich Kustodiev (1878-1927)

various conductors from later generations followed suit. As well as focusing No 1's martial aspect, Mitropoulos balances lamentation and breathless excitement in the finale, the latter exemplified by the stupendously thrilling closing pages which, while hardly watertight, dance with a vengeance.

The second recorded performance, now available via YouTube in crumbly 'low-fi' and given by a studio symphony orchestra under an old friend of Rachmaninov's during his days in Russia, Nikolai Golovanov, straddles the period between 1944 and 1949 and comes across as hectic, rough-hewn and wildly impulsive (No 3 is positively electric). Coarse-sounding and occasionally poorly played



it may be but passages such as the first dance's lyrical second subject emerge like a loving embrace.

The first version of the *Dances* to be commercially recorded in the West featured the Rochester Philharmonic under Erich Leinsdorf (CBS, 6/53 – nla). 'Capably led' is how Harold C Schonberg described it in our pages, adding a musical appraisal regarding 'negative, rather tired-sounding dances in which some of the composer's mannerisms turn up again and again'. Blame the messenger is what I say: under Leinsdorf the first dance is dragged down by a slovenly opening, the second lacks any sense of seduction while the third does at least enjoy emphatically played closing pages.

STEREO TRAILBLAZERS

One can merely speculate how the passage of time might have altered **Eugene Ormandy's** approach, if at all. On his superbly played 1960 Philadelphia stereo recording the saxophone is indeed *molto espressivo* and Ormandy observes the *perdendo* directive (dying away, six bars after fig 81) before the *Allegro vivace* returns in the final dance. No 2 is plush, with all voices well integrated into the overall texture, while No 3 enjoys the benefit of lightning reflexes. Only No 1 now strikes me as relatively earthbound, at least initially. **Eugene Goossens's** robust LSO recording from the same year is as honest as the day is long, dramatic at times too, but the playing is prone to raggedness;

and although the recording is surprisingly dynamic, Edward Greenfield's claim that it was 'never more than a stopgap' (a view he expressed in the context of reviewing **Kirill Kondrashin's** 1963 Moscow Philharmonic recording) isn't too far off the mark.

Kondrashin himself is generally attentive to written dynamics, speeding or relaxing as the mood dictates and whizzing along at the end of No 2. His is an assertive, well-drilled performance, a classic of sorts, invariably gripping and with never a hint of indulgence; but much as I'm wont to tolerate elderly sound, in this case frequent over-modulation and a tinnitus-inducing xylophone compromised my



Composer and conductor: Rachmaninov and Eugene Ormandy preparing the premiere of the Symphonic Dances

enjoyment. Possibly the best-sounding transfer is included in Profil's excellent 'Kyrill Kondrashin Edition 1937-1963' (to be reviewed next month). A 1976 Concertgebouw/Kondrashin version (Emergo Classics) is softer-grained but marginally less involving.

Evgeny Svetlanov, live in 1986, employs gestural excesses that years ago would have drained me, but on this encounter I warmed to the heartfelt dying away at the slow centre of No 3 and the marked tonal contrast between the cor anglais and oboe near the start of No 2, where later on the savage return of the opening brass motif (two bars after fig 45) is positively shocking. The problem here is the recorded balance, with woodwinds that are in-your-face and, worse, intrusive audience noise. Svetlanov caps the tam-tam at the end of the work, whereas on his almost as thrilling 1973 non-live recording he allows a smidgen of reverb.

There's an odd textual anomaly on **Edo de Waart's** recording with the London Philharmonic in that the quaver/semiquaver figure in the first bar of No 3 is played as three notes of equal length, something I'd not encountered before hearing Neeme Järvi's Chandos recording (see below). Still, there are virtues to admire here: the way the mood shifts from *tempo rubato* at the beginning of No 2

to a strict tempo for the solo violin, and the contrasts between the opening motif as played muted and later on unmuted. Viewed overall, de Waart tells it as it is on the page rather than as it might have been in the mind of someone with more imagination.

With **André Previn** at the helm, the LSO, while not quite as well drilled as some rivals, get under the skin of the music. The muted brass motif at the start of No 2 sounds an alarm, and even more so later on, unmuted. This is less a 'valse triste' than a 'valse macabre'; and come No 3, as with Ormandy, the references back to *The Isle of the Dead* (around 4'00" in) really tug at the heartstrings, while at the work's close the tam-tam honours the *laissez vibrer* ('let it vibrate') direction, loudly skidding forwards after the rest of the orchestra has stopped – a ghostly and unsettling effect. Still, it's worth pointing out that the marking doesn't apply to the final gong stroke but the one that strikes *ff* two bars before – in other words the first of three. So you could say the jury is permanently out on this particular issue.

The real drama of No 1 starts at fig 1, with *fortissimo* down-bow string chords that on most recordings anticipate, in their tautness, the *molto marcato* marking a few bars later. Not on **Simon Rattle's** 1982 CBSO recording, however, where

the chords are played with as a sort of loud, fatty legato. Rattle's Berlin remake is far superior in this and most other respects, not least a generous extra level of tension in No 3 and some gong reverb at the very end, which is denied us in Birmingham. Also in Birmingham

he plays those extra piano chords in No 1, something he doesn't do in Berlin.

MOSTLY DIGITAL

Again from Berlin, **Lorin Maazel** in 1983 presents a neat, clear, at times almost Stravinskian account of the *Dances*, No 1 pert, balletic and decisive, No 2 very much in strict waltz time, even when it speeds up later on. I love the sudden prod to *forte* at fig 1 and the expressive rise and fall of the central string melody. My only problem with the finale is regarding the tam-tam towards the end, not because of a lack of overhang – plenty deprive us of that – but because you're almost never aware of it beforehand, which compromises the music's innate sense of Orthodox ritual.

Vladimir Ashkenazy has visited this music a number of times, if you take into account the two-piano version. Of his recordings with orchestra, the first, with the Concertgebouw, is easily the most impressive, a radiant, weighty, full-bodied production awash with significant detail, thrillingly played and with a swiftly paced account of No 1. At three after fig 17 there's the quiet, eerie growl of bass clarinet, clarinet, contrabassoon, bass trombone, tuba and sundry percussion, better caught here than anywhere else, while No 2 is purple brushed velvet and No 3 enjoys some magnificent brass-

THE HISTORICAL CHOICE

New York Philharmonic Symphony Orch / Dimitri Mitropoulos Marston Ⓢ 53022-2
The composer demonstrates his new score on the piano, then we hear Mitropoulos's



firebrand account of the *Dances* – a gripping interpretation that Rachmaninov preferred to that of Eugene Ormandy, the work's dedicatee.

THE DARKER CHOICE

WDR Symphony Orch, Cologne / Semyon Bychkov Profil Ⓢ PH07028

Bychkov sneaks us back within bleak Russian borders to a land of tolling bells, replete with religious ritual, where dancing is a form of physical prayer. By no means lacking in vitality, Bychkov's *Dances* stress the music's valedictory aspect.



THE WILD CARD

USSR Symphony Orch / Evgeny Svetlanov Regis Ⓢ RRC1178

Svetlanov's live *Dances* also awaken images of Old Russia. The sound glares occasionally and there's a noisy audience, but the sum effect transports us to the place where Rachmaninov's soul still resided when he wrote the piece.



playing. The last chord stops dead, whereas on both his Sydney Symphony recording of 2007 and his 2016 live Philharmonia version the gong makes a cameo showing. ‘Halfway house’ is how David Gutman aptly described it. Well judged is how I’d put it. The later versions include the extra piano-writing in No 1, which the Concertgebouw option doesn’t. Best in the Sydney performance is the hotfoot finale, which presses for maximum tension, while its London successor is the most wistful of the three, even intimate at times, with the broadest account of No 2. Still, for me Ashkenazy in Amsterdam reached boiling point in a way that he never quite managed to do on his later recordings.

No one could complain that **Pavel Kogan’s** 1990 Moscow recording lacks heat, the reference back to the First Symphony in No 1 laid on with a trowel, No 2 cavorting playfully, with a wide range of tempos, and No 3 either furiously fast or filled with heartache. It’s a real thriller, this one, though maybe the occasionally glaring sound is a drawback. **Charles Dutoit** in Philadelphia was recorded in the same year and, judged purely as sound, is among the finest available, bold but luxuriant in tone; big on detail too, with the crescendoing horns near the start of No 2 and numerous freshly liberated inner voices. The glowing embers of memory at the centre of No 3 touch the heart but Dutoit also strikes thunder into the closing pages, though the tam-tam is rather tame.

Mariss Jansons has given us an excellent Concertgebouw take on the *Dances* but is perhaps best represented in recordings with the St Petersburg Philharmonic and Bavarian Radio Symphony orchestras. Both report Rachmaninov’s use of snarling stopped horns and there’s plenty of rhythmic thrust in Nos 1 and 3, though in St Petersburg at fig 14 the piano sounds a little stiff-jointed. Jansons brings a winning lilt to No 2, upping the pace slightly for St Petersburg, in keeping with higher levels of tension elsewhere. On the later Munich version, you hear far more of what’s going on and the richness of the sound is a significant draw. Still, on both recordings, time and again I felt that although all the right buttons were being pushed, the resultant total wasn’t quite high enough.

John Eliot Gardiner’s 1993 account with the NDR Symphony Orchestra is marked by tautness of execution and very vivid sound. Maybe the saxophone in No 1 sounds a mite bashful and the nostalgic self-reference at the close of the movement isn’t quite *cantabile* enough. But at 6’54” into No 2 Gardiner manages the transition back to the principal waltz theme with



Evgeny Svetlanov: conducted two Soviet-era recordings

genuine magic, and the orchestra conjures a suitably rich sound. As to the finale, Gardiner really goes for the *fortissimo laisser vibrer* effect, the tam-tam mushrooming loud enough to wake the dead (and, with the ‘Dies irae’ still ringing in our ears, that’s hardly inappropriate).

Imposing is how I’d describe **Mikhail Pletnev’s** 1997 *Dances* with the Russian National Orchestra, No 1 uncommonly broad, a real *molto marcato*, the *non allegro* directive taken literally. The central section of No 1 is dreamy and that point where the bass clarinet and its menacing accomplices escort us back to the outer body of the dance (8’39”) really makes one shudder. No 2, on the other hand, eschews lushness, while No 3 raises the roof with maximum dynamism, at least when the music isn’t framing a lament, which Pletnev also does beautifully.

If Pletnev compromises on lushness, **Valéry Polyansky** and the Russian State Symphony Orchestra opt for some very broad tempos, especially in No 2 at the onset of the cor anglais solo at fig 32, and even more so beyond that point. This performance is better on mood than on movement, though there’s a roaring sea of tam-tam sonority towards the close of the piece. Alas, on **Yuri Temirkanov’s** live 2008 recording with the St Petersburg Philharmonic the tam-tam serves merely to

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1942 New York Philh SO / Mitropoulos	Marston (F) ③ 53022-2 (10/18)
1960 LSO / Goossens	Everest (F) EVC9002 (3/64 ^R , 4/95)
1960 Philadelphia Orch / Ormandy	Sony Classical (M) ➤ SK48279 (6/93)
1963 Moscow PO / Kondrashin	Melodiya (F) MELCD100 0840; Profil (S) ⑬ PH18046 (9/69 ^R)
1972 LPO / de Waart	Decca Eloquence (S) ④ ELQ482 8981 (1/73 ^R , 11/18)
1973 USSR St Academic SO / Svetlanov	Melodiya (M) (56 discs) MELCD100 2481 (10/17)
1976 LSO / Previn	Warner Classics (S) ⑧ 9029 58692-5 (9/76 ^R , 10/93 ^R)
1982 CBSO / Rattle	Warner Classics (S) (52 discs) 2564 61005-5 (3/84 ^R)
1983 Concertgebouw Orch / Ashkenazy	Decca (S) ③ 455 798-2LC3 (4/84 ^R)
1983 BPO / Maazel	DG (M) 478 4238GB; (S) ⑤ 479 3631GB5 (3/84 ^R)
1986 USSR SO / Svetlanov	Regis (B) RRC1178 (5/81 ^R)
1990 Philadelphia Orch / Dutoit	Decca (F) 433 181-2DH (4/92)
1990 Moscow St SO / Kogan	Alto (S) ALC1030 (1/09); (S) ⑥ ALC6005
1991 Philharmonia Orch / N Järvi	Chandos (B) CHAN10234; (S) (25 discs) CHAN20088 (A/18)
1992 St Petersburg PO / Jansons	Warner Classics (S) ③ 500885-2; (S) ⑤ 2564 62782-7 (12/93 ^R)
1993 NDR SO / Gardiner	DG (F) 445 838-2GH (1/96)
1997 Russian Nat Orch / Pletnev	DG (S) ④ 477 9505GB4 (7/98 ^R)
1998 Russian St SO / Polyansky	Chandos (M) ➤ CHAN9759 (2/00)
2003 LPO / Jurowski	LPO (M) LPO0004 (7/05)
2004 Royal Concertgebouw Orch / Jansons	RCO Live (F) RCO05004 (2/06)
2004 St Petersburg PO / Temirkanov	Warner Classics (F) 2564 62050-2 (A/05)
2006 WDR SO, Cologne / Bychkov	Profil (M) PH07028 (11/07)
2007 Sydney SO / Ashkenazy	Exton (F) ⑤ EXCLO0018 (4/09)
2008 St Petersburg PO / Temirkanov	Signum (F) SIGCD229
2009 LSO / Gergiev	LSO (M) LSO0688 (6/12); (B) ③ LSO0816
2010 BPO / Rattle	Warner Classics (F) 984519-2 (10/13)
2011 Orch de Paris / P Järvi	Erato (F) 2564 61957-9 (A/15)
2012 Detroit SO / Slatkin	Naxos (M) 8 573051 (7/13)
2013 Cologne Gürzenich Orch / Kitaenko	Oehms (F) OC442 (1/16)
2016 Philharmonia Orch / Ashkenazy	Signum (F) SIGCD540 (A/18)
2017 Bavarian RSO / Jansons	BR-Klassik (F) 900154 (4/18)

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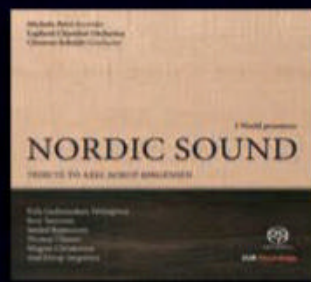
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cue volleys of applause, which rather spoils the effect. Otherwise this is a beautifully engineered version, especially when it comes to distinguishing between horns that are either stopped or not in No 2, while the gradual dying away from fig 81 in No 3 is sensitively handled. Temirkanov also acknowledges, in performance terms, the significant combination of the 'Dies irae' chant and a key motif from the composer's own *All-Night Vigil* in the same movement. No question that he's performing on home ground. A live Proms recording from four years earlier featuring the same forces is less impressive.

MORE 21st-CENTURY CONTENDERS

Vladimir Jurowski, live with the London Philharmonic in 2003, also cues a closing ruckus with the tam-tam but in his case there's a respectable break after the gong stroke before the applause sets in. Jurowski is a true stylist and I've never heard the marriage of piano and strings at 6'45" into No 1 sound so natural, almost like a passage from a Romantic duo sonata. No 2 enjoys blazing climaxes and the trumpet fanfares in No 3 have a real lift to them. Spontaneity and fire reign throughout and the only factor that bars a top-ranking recommendation is the amount of audience noise, which at times is just too intrusive.

Semyon Bychkov's 2006 broadcast recording with the WDR Symphony Orchestra bears witness to pounding *tutti* wallops in No 1 and a seductive *mezzo-forte con espressione* entry of the strings at fig 14. The piano is clearly audible and Bychkov includes the added piano bars at fig 7. In No 2 at three before fig 31, the sense of *tempo rubato* among the quiet stopped horns is not unlike the effect suggested on the composer's piano demonstration, though maybe Bychkov pushes for a bit too much acceleration later on. More significant still is the end of No 3, where the prominent, well-placed *laissez vibrer* tam-tam stroke is vividly captured so that when the final chord strikes, and the tam-tam overhang lingers momentarily behind, the effect is entirely convincing. Not for Bychkov a J Arthur Rank-style add-on.

Mahlerian weightiness and first-rate sound immediately impress on **Valery Gergiev's** 2009 recording with the London Symphony Orchestra, a performance characterised by brute force and heavy accents. This reading wears a scowl and No 1 clocks up 13 minutes (as with Pletnev), which is fairly generous in comparison with some of its rivals. No 2 ebbs and flows with a sense of longing, the cellos at fig 45 achingly expressive, while the lamenting centre of No 3 sounds



Electrifying: Paavo Järvi in Paris

deeply Russian; likewise the obsessive 'Dies irae' references that drive the work to its close. When reviewing the original release our Rachmaninov guru Geoffrey Norris found the performance a little flawed by 'indulgences of the moment', which worried me less because those indulgences seem to bespeak sincerity.

If GN raised his eyebrows at Gergiev's indulgences, I dread to think what he would think of a cymbal crescendo that **Dmitri Kitaenko** inserts at 9'00" into No 2. And yet, for all its excesses – and there are a few – this is a memorable account (Kitaenko's second of the work), the saxophone in No 1 a first among equals, sharing sighs and memories among fellow winds. I was also glad that some of the piano-writing (including those optional bars at fig 7) is more clearly audible than on most other versions. And have the augmented timp taps in No 3 (four bars after fig 73) ever sounded more reminiscent of the start of Siegfried's Funeral Music in *Götterdämmerung*? Was Rachmaninov, like Shostakovich many years later, playing his final curtain with Wagner in mind?

Paavo Järvi and the Orchestre de Paris meld visceral excitement with interpretative originality, building a crescendo on the tims near the opening, mischievously pointing the bass clarinet and bassoons at 7'28" and bringing the crescendoing horns at fig 21 into exciting prominence. The saxophone solo is heartache personified and at the start of No 2 you realise what Rachmaninov meant by the marking *tempo rubato*. Oscillating tempos in No 2 are well judged – the tension never spirals out of control – and there's also much delicate detail, for example between figs 73 and 74 (which includes that *Götterdämmerung* allusion). The final reckoning in No 3 has the tam-tam push decibels to the maximum

and there is no overhang. That's fine by me, given that, strictly speaking, the *laissez vibrer* directive isn't at the end of the work.

Neeme Järvi does things quite differently, letting the tam-tam sigh to infinity. At the start of No 3 the three notes are given equal value, almost as marked as on de Waart's recording, though the bass clarinet/bassoon passage (7'26") hasn't the spine-chilling effect that Paavo achieves on his recording.

No such familial comparisons suggest themselves in the case of **Leonard Slatkin**, son of Felix, whose worthy Detroit version of the *Dances* dates from 2012, save perhaps for some expressive portamento among the strings in No 2 – very much part of the Slatkin family DNA, I would have thought. Slatkin includes the piano-writing at fig 7 in No 1 and interestingly brings out the contrabassoon beneath the 'Alliluya' at fig 99.

A FINAL RECKONING

And the rest? Apologies to fans of Enrique Bátiz, Andrew Davis, Vladimir Fedoseyev, Donald Johanos, Andrew Litton and Charles Mackerras, all of them worth sampling, but I had to draw the line somewhere. At least 20 orchestral versions of the *Symphonic Dances* have appeared on CD since Michael Stewart's Collection and, to be honest, I'm tempted to say 'no change'. Ashkenazy with the Concertgebouw Orchestra remains as impressive as ever. But although Paavo Järvi in Paris and Semyon Bychkov in Cologne might not tick all the requisite boxes, both add a few that others miss out on. Järvi is particularly impressive, which is why I'm awarding him top billing. The playing of the Orchestre de Paris is often electrifying, extending the association that the finest French orchestras already have with the best Russian Romantic music. Järvi nails the music's spirit, its combination of nostalgia and ritual austerity, its fierce rhythms and its dazzling orchestration. **G**

THE TOP CHOICE

Orchestre de Paris / Paavo Järvi

Erato (M) 2564 61957-9

Paavo Järvi drives a dramatic narrative without cracking the music's romantic veneer. Ever light on his feet, he's a master of rubato, a sprinter with a keen sense of



rhythm, an evident lover of the score as much for its balletic exterior as for its spiritual depth. His mastery is complete and the Orchestre de Paris is on top form.

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Odense Concert Hall & online

Carl Nielsen Competition, March 21-31

The Carl Nielsen Competition is a contest whose winners are worth watching – its 2016 joint winners, violinists Jiyeon Lee and Liya Petrova, have both featured in ‘One to Watch’ in our pages in recent months. It’s a fresh new format this year too, because while traditionally the competition has annually rotated its three disciplines (taken from the instruments for which Nielsen wrote a concerto), this year it will for the first time be running its violin, clarinet and flute competitions concurrently. Plus its judges are a seriously high-profile bunch: Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider – a former Carl Nielsen Competition winner himself – is Competition President, supported by Artistic Advisors the clarinettist Martin Fröst and the flautist Emmanuel Pahud. As for the prizes, these include a First of €12,000 cash along with a recording deal with Orchid Classics worth €13,000, and concert appearances with up to 10 orchestras and festivals including the Odense Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and the Oslo Philharmonic. Those who can’t make it in person can catch it on [medici.tv](#) and also on the competition’s own website – and can even watch the final on *Gramophone’s* website.

[carlnielsencompetition.com](#); [medici.tv](#)

Juilliard School, New York & online

Juilliard String Quartet masterclass, March 26

Live streams from the Juilliard School aren’t all that regular, but when they do pop up they’re well worth catching, either live or on catch-up. This live-streamed public masterclass is a testament to this, featuring violinist Areta Zhulla and viola-player Roger Tapping of the legendary Juilliard Quartet imparting their wisdom to Juilliard students.

[juilliard.edu](#)

Windsor Castle & online

Windsor Festival International String Competition semi-finals & final, March 26-29

Launched in 2008, this biennial competition, hosted at Windsor Castle as a tribute to Yehudi Menuhin, counts among its previous winners the violinists Nathan Meltzer, Jiyeon Lee and Benjamin Baker. Prizes for 2019 include a First of returning to Windsor to play a concerto with the competition’s Associate Orchestra, the Philharmonia. Also on offer is a solo recording opportunity with Champs Hill Records, and a fine contemporary bow. The live-streamed semi-finals and final (note that the final will either be live streamed or available soon afterwards) are clearly going to make for good watching, too; the already announced

semi-finalists – a chamber round – are a properly interesting group who include players such as YCAT cellist Jamal Aliyev from Turkey who already has an excellent Champs Hill recording under his belt, the rising British violinist and former St John’s Smith Square Young Artist, Mathilde Milwidsky, the British-Korean violinist Julia Hwang who again already has a strong recording for Signum to her name, and the Danish cellist Jonathan Swensen who won the 2018 Khachaturian International Cello Competition. Then there’s the fact that the final will be accompanied by the Philharmonia Orchestra. So we’re expecting some truly impressive music-making over these few days.

[windsorfestival.com](#); [facebook.com/WindsorFestival/](#)

Gothenburg Concert Hall & GSoplay

Rouvali conducts Stravinsky’s recently-discovered *Funeral Song*, March 29

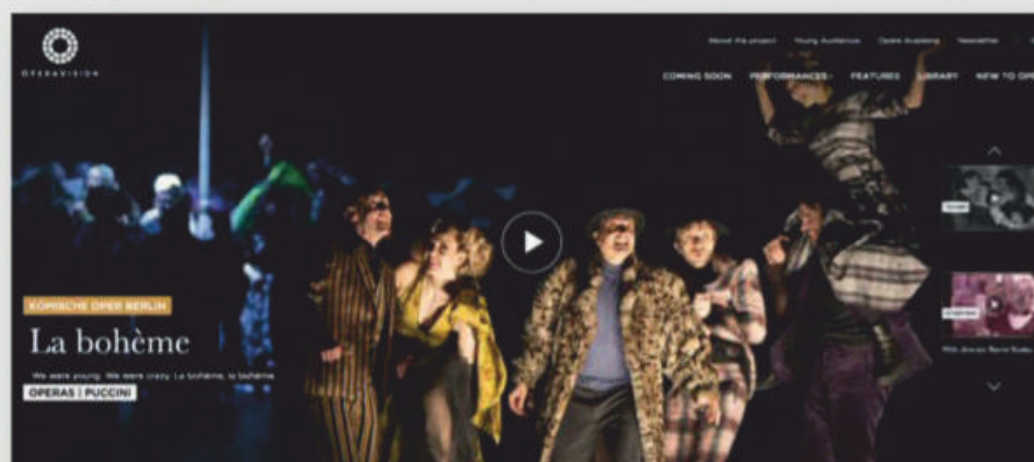
Stravinsky’s early-career *Funeral Song* was rediscovered only in 2016 and performed for the first time since its first and only previous outing in 1909, appropriately by Valery Gergiev and the Mariinsky Orchestra. As a result, this work described as the missing link between *Fireworks* and *The Firebird* is one you can still be forgiven for not yet being very

ARCHIVE OPERA REVIEW

The Komische Oper’s Barrie Kosky gives us a characteristically imaginative new take on a *La bohème*

Puccini

This fresh new production, created by the Berlin Komische Oper resident team of Barrie Kosky (Intendant) and Jordan de Souza (Music Director), is stripped down and edited like a film to focus in wholly on the story of the Bohemians and their two girls. No Benoît actually appears to collect the rent in Act 1 (his vocal part is uncanonically taken by all four students, his visual appearance by a passed-around hat), nor are any of the Act 3 workers’ chorus workers shown entering a real customs gate (it’s a split cloth with a projection of the old city). The Momus act, while suitably bustling, is blessedly devoid of the pseudo-Grand Opera spectacle often indulged.



The staging is relocated to the time of the opera’s composition in the 1890s: costumes owe much to Adolfo Hohenstein’s premiere poster images while settings hark back to daguerreotype pictures contemporary with Henri Murger’s original source story (Marcello here is photographer rather than painter). In its black and white feel this well conveys a sense of the death and illness

which Mimì’s fate brings to the Bohemians’ gaiety.

Likewise the conductor de Souza’s handling of the score is more a sound of the 1890s than the updated version of earlier Romantic operas one hears so often – you can hear

the 20th century just round the corner. The opera has been optimally cast both for sound and vision – a cunning mix of youth and experience, with a strong, sparky Mimì in Nadja Mchantaf and a well-balanced, sympathy-earning Marcello in Günter Papendell. Hugely recommended.

Mike Ashman

Available to view free of charge until July 26,

familiar with (the work's first recording came last year on Decca from Riccardo Chailly and the Lucerne Festival Orchestra). This performance from the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and its music director Santtu-Matias Rouvali sees it paired with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, plus Esa-Pekka Salonen's Violin Concerto of 2009 with Jennifer Koh as soloist.

gso.se

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden & cinemas worldwide

Netrebko and Kaufmann star in *La forza del destino*, March 29

Christof Loy stages Verdi's *La forza del destino* with a very starry cast under Sir Antonio Pappano. Heading the line-up are Anna Netrebko as Leonora and Jonas Kaufmann as Don Alvaro. Other cast members include Ludovic Tézier, Feruccio Furlanetto, Alessandro Corbelli and Veronica Simeoni.

roh.org.uk/showings

Philharmonie, Berlin & online

Daniel Harding conducts two 20th-century classics and a Mahler symphony, March 29

Concluding with Mahler's First Symphony from 1889, Daniel Harding's programme gives us two works that show how far music diverged in the 20th century – Alban Berg's Three Fragments from *Wozzeck* (with the soprano Dorothea Röschmann) from 1925 and Charles Ives's Orchestral Set No 1, *Three Pieces in New England* from just before the First World War. Catch it live or later in the archive.

digitalconcerthall.com

Nationaltheater, Munich & Staatsoper.TV

Gaffigan conducts a new production of *La fanciulla del West*, March 30

This new production for the Bavarian State Opera of Puccini's gold-digger western, based on the play David Belasco, is entrusted to Andreas Dresen, one of Germany's most admired film directors, whose style, based on improvisation, lends his work a very realistic, semi-documentary feel. James Gaffigan conducts the colourful score, with a cast featuring Anja Kampe as Minnie, Brandon Jovanovich as Dick Johnson and John Lundgren as Jack Rance.

staatsoper.de/en

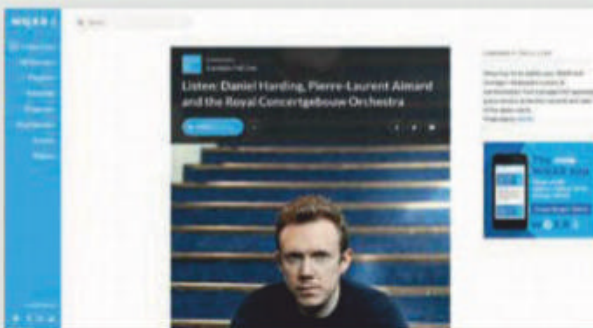
Metropolitan Opera, New York & in cinemas

Philippe Jordan conducts *Die Walküre*, March 30

Philippe Jordan is in the pit for the latest outing of the Met's *Ring* cycle, directed by Robert Lepage. The second instalment of the tetralogy, *Die Walküre*, features a strong cast with Stuart Skelton and Eva-Maria Westbroek as the incestuous twins Siegmund and

ARCHIVE CONCERT REVIEW (AUDIO)

Daniel Harding and Amsterdam's great orchestra on tour in New York



Connesson · Beethoven · R Strauss

Jeff Spurgeon and John Schaeffer are your informal but informed backstage hosts for 'Carnegie Hall Live', a growing library of concert broadcasts recorded by the New York radio station WQXR and streamed online in decent, relatively uncompressed sound.

Late in February Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra paid a visit, with Spurgeon and Schaeffer discussing Daniel Harding as stand-in maestro after Daniele Gatti's dismissal from the job. They opened with Guillaume Connesson's *Eirene*, a 'nocturnal poem' named after the Greek goddess of Peace, drifting lazily on the winds like a Postlude après la Prélude.

Pierre-Laurent Aimard then pops into the WQXR studio to introduce his

performance of Beethoven's *Emperor*. He stresses the humour of the concerto's finale, but there's no shortage of compact and incisive orchestral support for his commanding view of the first movement. As *Emperors* go it's much more Frederick the Great than Kaiser Wilhelm, quick-witted and hot-tempered with power held in reserve.

Frederick would have nodded approval at Harding's enumeration of a successful conductor's qualities: no wasted energy and learning to intervene at the decisive moment. So would Richard Strauss, whose *Ein Heldenleben* (dedicated to the players of Willem Mengelberg's Concertgebouw) sounds more than ever like an undercover symphony in this swift and conversational account, led by some beautifully understated solos from leader Liviu Prunaru as the hero's companion. The stream's dynamic compression can't handle the heat of *The Battle*, but enough can be made out here and in a diaphanously textured apotheosis to suggest that the orchestra is auditioning a serious contender for Gatti's replacement. **Peter Quantrill**
Available to listen to for free at wqxr.org

Sieglinde. Greer Grimsley sings Wotan and Christine Goerke Brünnhilde. Jaimie Barton is Fricka with Günther Groissböck as Hunding. Catch it at a cinema near you.

metopera.org/season/in-cinemas/

Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online

Ludovic Morlot conducts the Detroit, April 13

Ludovic Morlot is the music director of *Gramophone's* 2018 Orchestra of the Year, the Seattle Symphony Orchestra. This live-streamed guest spot with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra opens with *Divisions*, written for him and the Seattle Symphony in 2014 by the American composer Sebastian Currier. They're then joined for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 4 by Morlot's compatriot Hélène Grimaud, before their programme closes with Prokofiev's Symphony No 5. Catch it on the Detroit SO's DSOLive website.

dso.org

Meyerson Symphony Center, Dallas & Facebook Live

Fabio Luisi conducts the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, April 18

A big one for both the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Fabio Luisi, this concert is being

live-streamed on Facebook. It sees Luisi step onto the Dallas podium for the first time since being named as the orchestra's music director designate. It's an inventive programme, too, opening with William Grant Still's *Poem for Orchestra*, continuing with Frank Martin's Concerto for Seven Winds, Timpani, Percussion and Strings, before ending with Beethoven's Symphony No 7.

mydso.com; facebook.com/DallasSymphony/

Palau de les Arts, Valencia & online

Penella's *La malquerida*, April 18

Three cheers for the free streaming platform OperaVision, because if ever there were a work that you'd be unlikely to stumble across in normal day-to-day opera-going, this is one. Premiered in 1935, Manuel Penella's zarzuela *La malquerida* is based on the play of the same title by Jacinto Benavente, with Penella responsible for the libretto as well as the score. Although this isn't a major-league production it should make for a fascinatingly off-piste evening of operatic fare. Santiago Serrate conducts the Orquesta de la Comunitat Valenciana in Emilio López's production, with the singers of Centre Plácido Domingo.

lesarts.com; operavision.eu

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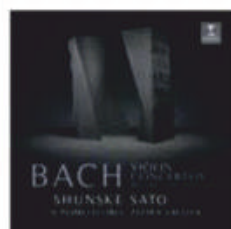
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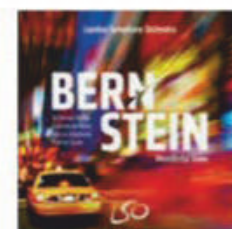
A small but impressive pair of speakers, a multi-room streaming solution, and can digital networks be improved?

Andrew Everard,
Audio Editor

APRIL TEST DISCS



A big, resonant acoustic could cloud the intent of this period-instrument Bach recording, but the 88.2kHz/24bit hi-res version boosts clarity



An exuberant recording of Bernstein's New York musical benefits from an all-star cast, great performances – and a fine 96kHz/24bit recording

Plenty of vinyl action – and much more

The stream of new record-playing products continues, all part of a constantly evolving hi-fi landscape



Austrian-based Pro-Ject is a frequent visitor to this news page, and for one simple reason – the company just keeps on launching interesting products. But its latest arrivals see it spreading its influence into new areas, with the launch of cartridges to complement its turntables, and a new record label.

Pro-Ject has long had an association with celebrated cartridge manufacturer Ortofon – the Danish company supplies the pre-fitted pickups on Pro-Ject turntables, including the Pick-IT 25A and Ortofon 2M Silver, but now Pro-Ject is voicing its own cartridges under the Pick-IT name, which are being made for it by Ortofon.

The two new Pick-IT models are the £125 S2, a moving magnet design drawing on the Ortofon Concorde design, and the moving coil DS2 **1**, which sells for £525. The S2 is designed to fit straight onto any tonearm with an SME-type interchangeable headshell system, meaning that no set up or alignment is required beyond adjusting the tracking weight. In addition, the S2 can be upgraded with the installation of Ortofon's range of Concorde styluses.

The DS2 uses a nude elliptical stylus, and a body made using a Selective Laser Sintering process to create a housing that's almost resonance-free.

Pro-Ject is also launching its own record label, remastering the Vienna

Philharmonic/Böhm recording of Beethoven's Sixth symphony from the original mastertapes for release as a two-LP set using 180g premium vinyl **2**.

And finally, Pro-Ject parent company Audio Tuning is expanding its recently acquired Musical Fidelity brand with the reintroduction of the M6 series, for the first time featuring a preamplifier/power amplifier combination **3**. The M6 PRE, selling for £1899, has six line inputs – two balanced and four unbalanced – plus a switchable MM/MC phono stage, while the digital section includes an asynchronous USB input for use with a computer. There's also a passthrough input for use in home cinema systems.

The M6 PRX draws on Musical Fidelity's past work with dual-mono, choke-regulated amplifier topology: the £2599 power amp delivers 230Wpc into eight ohms, and is designed for 'extremely low wide-band distortion, low output impedance, outstanding load driving characteristics, enormous stability margins and very high peak current delivery.' The two products can also be bought as a £4000 bundle, saving just under £500.

British turntable manufacturer SME recently launched its Model 10A Black Edition **4**, supplied complete with the company's all-new, all-black version of the ME M10 tonearm, and pre-fitted with an Ortofon Cadenza cartridge. Selling for £6196, the turntable was launched in a

limited edition of just 30 units, exclusively for the UK market.

Rather more available – if much more expensive – should be the VPI HW-40, named for the American company's founder, Harry Weisfield **5**, and to celebrate its 40th anniversary. A direct drive model, it uses an innovative magnetless motor to avoid the 'cogging' effect found in some such designs, and is able to bring its 11kg+ platter up to speed and back to a halt in a second. The turntable comes fitted with a 3D printed Fat-Boy tonearm, designed for ultra-low friction operation and easy set-up, and is finished with a clear acrylics cover and wooden side-cheeks. It sells for £15,000.

Also from a famous US audio name is the new Definitive Technology Demand Series **6**, a trio of new bookshelf speakers designed around a range of the company's proprietary technologies. They use an offset tweeter to avoid diffraction effects and enhance imaging, along with a new 20/20 Wave Alignment Lens to improve dispersion, while the mid/bass drivers use a Linear Response Waveguide to the same effect. The speakers also use an aluminium front baffle and high-gloss cabinets, with reflex bass loading in the smallest model, the £599/pr D7, and passive bass radiators for the £799/pr D9 and the D11, at £1049 a pair. All models have wall-mount inserts, and lock threads for use with the optional ST1 stands. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Fyne Audio F301

A new name, but the Scottish heritage of these little speakers is long-established. How do they shape up in a market that's not exactly under-populated?

When it comes to setting up an audio company, one making loudspeakers often looks like the easy option: after all, many audio enthusiasts of the past have built their own speakers, either from a kit or using one of the 'recipes' easily found in books or (latterly) online. With some woodworking and basic electronic skills, plus 'off the shelf' drive units, it's relatively simple to build yourself a pair of boxes that both look and sound pretty decent.

Trouble is, after that first pair is when the problems set in: you look and listen, and you think 'that wasn't so hard; maybe I can make more of these and sell them', before (hopefully) realising that making one pair is OK, but making many of them to a repeatable standard is when it gets tricky. And all that's before you consider the logistics of sourcing and testing parts, packaging and shipping the product, and finding a way to actually sell them.

Their bass is powerful but beautifully controlled, giving music a real sense of scale and purpose

It's not as easy as it seems, so it's clear that the best foundation on which to build a new speaker company is to have previous experience of an old speaker company. Which is just what Fyne Audio has: a combined 200 years of it, spread among the founding team, much of it gained with that formerly huge Scottish speaker company whose name is in the dictionary for its contribution to public address systems.



FYNE AUDIO F301

Type Two-way standmount speaker

Price £250/pr

Drivers 25mm soft-dome tweeter, 15cm mid/bass unit

Crossover frequency 3.2kHz

Amplifier power 25-100W (recommended),

50W (continuous)

Sensitivity 89dB/W/m

Nominal impedance 8ohm

Finishes Walnut, black ash, light oak

Dimensions (HxWxD) 30x19x27.1cm

fyneaudio.com

Yet the first Fyne Audio products are no retro-Tannoys: yes, some of the more upmarket models may use coincident 'point source' drivers, with a tweeter at the centre of a mid/bass cone, but they are all-new 'IsoFlare' units, completely rethought and using a titanium dome compression driver and a 'multifibre' paper-based mid/bass diaphragm. The enclosures are all-new, too, from the cube-shaped F500 to the curved-wall F1-10, the first in a planned high-end range, finished in burr walnut with a 25cm IsoFlare driver standing proud to the front, both use patented internal bass systems, venting to the base of the speaker.

At the other extreme sits the speaker we have here: the £250/pr F301, the second-smallest model in the Fyne Audio F300 series. And it must be said that, beside the more expensive products, the little standmounter is notable at first glance for being very conventional: it's a 30cm-tall two-way rear-ported design, available in a choice of wood finishes.

If anything, that means the F301, and the other models in the series – there's a tiny F300, two floorstanders and a centre speaker, plus a trio of F3 active subwoofers – face a tougher challenge than the company's more exotic models. The F300 and F301, for example, are up against

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Fyne Audio speakers can punch above their weight, especially when partnered with ...

AUDIOLAB 6000A

Audiolab's excellent 6000A amplifier is both affordable and a fine digital/analogue solution. It works well with the F301s



NAIM UNITI ATOM

Thanks to a good onboard amplifier stage, the Naim Uniti Atom will create a great little network streaming system with the speakers



some well-established rivals, a couple of which have featured in these pages in recent months. And while they certainly look distinctive, not least due to the combination of high-quality wood effects and a gloss surround for the tweeter behind its mesh grille, it's clear these newcomers – irrespective of their heritage – are going to have to deliver performance, too.

The tweeter in the F301 is a 25mm polyester dome, with a phase loss compensator in the protective mesh, which the company says 'delays the output from specific areas of the dome to give a smooth and extended response'. The 15cm bass unit uses a mixture of paper and other fibres in its cone, with a separate phase plug at its centre, simply because Fyne Audio feels this sounds better. Also unusual is the shaping of the surround of the mid/bass unit: called FyneFlute, it uses computer-designed fluted mouldings to avoid the tendency of conventional rubber roll surrounds to reflect sound back into the cone at certain frequencies, rather than absorbing – or 'terminating' – unwanted energy.

The rear of the bass unit is coupled to the internal bracing of the cabinet using resonance-absorbing mastic, to increase the stiffness of the speaker, while the cabinet panels are cross-braced to optimise rigidity. Single-wired terminals feed the crossover, whose components include a low-loss laminate core for the low frequency and a polypropylene capacitor for the high-frequency section: the speaker is designed for use with amplifiers of 25-100W, and features 89dB/Wm sensitivity and 8ohm nominal impedance, suggesting it won't put too much strain on the kind of modest amplifiers with which it's likely to be used.

PERFORMANCE

Set up on solid stands – my hefty mass-loaded Atacama SE24s still do the job extremely well – and used with a bit of breathing space to the wall behind them to let the ports do their job, the F301 speakers quickly reveal that they're a cut above the usual 'bargain box' rivals. Their bass is powerful but beautifully controlled, giving music a real sense of scale and purpose, and combines to excellent effect with the open, detailed midband and a

treble that's sweet without ever being restrained. The overall effect is one of a speaker with widespread and enduring appeal, refusing to pander to the rather overblown 'exciting' sound commonly engineered into some models at this price level.

I tried the F301 speakers with a range of amplification, from my reference Naims down to the Audiolab 6000A reviewed last month and the Denon PMA-800NE, and while they prove an easy load, they're also revealing enough to show the benefits of upgrading the electronics with which they're driven.

The speakers do an impressive job of conjuring up the orchestral forces while giving a realistic perspective for the solo instrument

Playing the Nikolaj Znaider/LSO recording of Mozart's Second Violin Concerto, the speakers do an impressive job of conjuring up the orchestral forces, while at the same time giving a realistic perspective for the solo instrument. Meanwhile listening to Yuja Wang's live reading of Ligeti's Etudes shows not only the speed and precision of which these speakers are capable, but also their percussive dynamic ability when the music requires it.

This fluid, open balance also serves well the 'Pater peccavi' album by the Marian Consort under Rory McCleery, with the intertwining vocal lines both crisply delineated and delivered with a lovely sense of presence. In fact it's this combination of ease of listening and detail-delivery that sets the Fyne Audio speakers apart: it's only when you push them really hard to fill large spaces with high sound pressure levels that they begin to harden up, as if to say 'perhaps you need some bigger speakers'.

Entering a crowded marketplace with a new brand is always a risky business, however much knowledge and experience you have behind you, yet the Fyne Audio team seems to have pulled it off, with what is both a very classy speaker design, and a very competitive one. **G**

Or you could try...

As already mentioned, the Fyne Audio speakers enter a market that's hardly lacking options, whether one is building a first system, downsizing or simply setting up audio in a second room.

Wharfedale D310

The choice really starts with the excellent little Wharfedale D310 speakers reviewed recently in these pages: designed as an alternative to the company's Diamond range, they sell for £159, and yet combine a sweet treble, excellent dispersion to ensure you don't need to sit in one 'hot spot' and surprisingly powerful bass for tiny cabinets.



Wharfedale Diamond 11.1

However, if you prefer something more visually subtle than the slightly 'technical' looks of the D310s, Wharfedale also offers the Diamond 11.1, with its more curvaceous cabinets and piano gloss finishes, for around the £270 mark. For details of both, see **wharfedale.co.uk**



Q Acoustics 3020i

Also curved, but in a rather different manner, are the Q Acoustics 3020i speakers, at around the £250 mark. Available in a choice of finishes, and incorporating a range of innovative technologies, these are the latest chapter in a long-running affordable hi-fi success story, and have a highly persuasive sound. Find out more at **qacoustics.co.uk**



Bowers & Wilkins 607

Finally, a small speaker with a very upmarket approach, in the form of the Bowers & Wilkins 607, the £399 entry-level model in the new, slimmed-down 600 Series range. Extremely compact, and strikingly modern in a choice of white or black, the 607 uses technology from the company's flagship speakers to extremely good effect. See **bowers-wilkins.co.uk** for more information.



● REVIEW BLUESOUND VAULT 2i AND NODE 2i

Hi-res network solution

The latest multiroom system from the NAD/PSB speakers people comes with a range of new technologies

Multiroom audio is big news, and it's not hard to see why: the latest systems have made simple what was once possible only with a substantial investment in custom installation, not to mention all the domestic disruption involved in putting the systems into your home.

These days you no longer need a server rack in the cupboard under the stairs or a hub in the attic: you can start with nothing more than a single wireless speaker and the home Wi-Fi you probably already have, plus your smartphone or tablet device to control a system – you can start small and expand as your budget allows. What's more, it's all totally portable: unlike a dedicated installation, you can take today's whole-house audio systems with you should you move.

The Bluesound system has always gone beyond what the likes of Sonos and Denon's HEOS offered from the start, in that it was designed from the ground up to be a wireless high-resolution audio system, coming as it did from the parent company behind NAD electronics and PSB loudspeakers. Since it launched the original Bluesound models, the Canadian company has seen its rivals playing catch-up – although to date Sonos remains resolutely limited to CD-quality sound and no more.

Bluesound has evolved, from the original wedge-shaped Vault ripper/server/player and Node players to a more conventional line up of compact boxes in its second generation. The Node2 emerged as a slimline box designed to be plugged into an existing amplifier or system, while the PowerNode 2 – as above, but with built in amplification to drive speakers – and the Vault2 were designed to look like two Node2 boxes stacked. Especially neat was the industrial design solution for the Vault2, in which the slot-loading CD mechanism was fitted between the two 'boxes', both hiding and highlighting its functionality.

The latest '2i' versions of the Bluesound products, including the £1099 Vault 2i and the Node 2i (£499) we have here, have recently been announced; the amplified PowerNode 2i (£799) completes the 'components' line-up, while the five-strong speaker range starts with the Pulse Flex 2i at £299 and goes up through the

£499 Pulse Mini 2i, and £749 Pulse 2i to the Pulse Soundbar 2i at £799. The Pulse Sub subwoofer, selling for £599, is the only model carried over from the previous range, and all models are available in black and white at the same price with the exception of the soundbar, which attracts a £100 premium for the white finish.

As well as accessing both locally stored music and online services – and, in the case of the Vault 2i, allowing up to 2TB of music to be ripped from CD or downloaded onto its internal storage, which can then be played directly into an amplifier or accessed by other Bluesound devices – by the time you read this the new 2i models will have the latest Apple AirPlay 2 wireless multiroom technology, which allows streaming directly from Apple devices, with Siri voice control. What's more, owners of existing Bluesound products need only add one 'Gen 2i' product to extend this new functionality to their entire set-up. The new products also gain Alexa voice control using Amazon Echo devices and a new BlueVoice interface.

Bluetooth aptX HD is also provided, and in addition the new units have two-way Bluetooth, so they can stream from a phone or computer, as before, but also now play out to a pair of Bluetooth headphones or speakers.

PERFORMANCE

If you wanted a simple storage/playback solution for a single system, the Vault 2i would do very nicely. With simple disc-ripping and download, and connectivity to an amplifier via analogue (line plus subwoofer) or digital outputs, plus Ethernet networking to hook up to your router or Wi-Fi hub, all you need add is a phone or tablet running the BluOS app, and you're ready to go. All the cables are provided, and the set-up guide runs to just four steps in a little leaflet.

What the Node 2i brings to the party is the ability to have the Vault 2i snaffled away in a remote location, or connected to one system, while it connects to another system, or acts as the access point for your main set-up. It's also possible to scale up the installation by adding further Nodes to feed further 'zones', use Pownodes to drive remote speakers, or even bring music



BLUESOUND VAULT 2i

Type Network ripper/server/player

Price £1099

Internal storage 2TB hard drive

Supported file formats MP3, AAC, WMA, WMA-L, OGG, FLAC, ALAC, WAV, AIFF, MQA

Audio outputs Analogue line plus subwoofer, optical/coaxial digital, headphones

Audio inputs Combination 3.5mm optical digital/analogue

Other connectivity Ethernet, two USB Type A for external storage, 12V trigger out, external control in

Finishes Black, white

Dimensions (WxHxD) 22x9x19.1cm

BLUESOUND NODE 2i

Type Network player

Price £499

Supported file formats As Vault 2i

Audio outputs Analogue line, optical/coaxial digital, headphones

Audio inputs Combination 3.5mm optical digital/analogue

Other connectivity Ethernet, USB Type A, 12V trigger out, remote in

Finishes Black, white

Dimensions (HxWxD) 22x4.6x14.6cm

bluesound.com

to extra rooms with one of the all-in-one Pulse speakers.

What's more, if you already have network storage in the form of a NAS drive or similar, you could do without the Vault, and just use Nodes or Pulses under app control to build a system.

The new Bluesound products build on the success of past generations with added functionality, while maintaining performance – both sonically and operationally – that was never in question. Whether with heavily compressed MP3 files or hi-res FLACs, both the units here sound crisp, clean and neutral, although of course the sound improves as you move from low- to high-resolution file formats.

The sound here is powerful and well-detailed, making listening a pleasure, and comparing CDs with ripped versions played on the Vault or via the Node reveals no losses in the process, which is as it should be. These products make a compelling case for networked audio. **G**

● ESSAY

‘Yes, tinkering can improve your digital network’

So you thought only those committed to vinyl playback tweaked and fettled their systems? Not so – there’s plenty of scope in computer audio, too

The much-vaunted Philips slogan at the time of CD’s launch – ‘Perfect sound forever’ – has much to answer for. Not only was it incorrect, as those will tell you who experienced discs ‘bronzed’ to the point they could no longer be played, it also suggested that once something was digital, that was it, and further improvement was impossible.

These days we all know that some of those early CD recordings sounded horrid, and that even within the limitations of the ‘Red Book’ standard – the 44.1kHz/16bit CD format – improvements have been made in how discs are mastered and made, and the sound has improved over the system’s 35-plus-year history. Without even considering the newer ‘super audio’ or ‘high-resolution’ formats, there’s been a lot of work on the mastering for CD in particular, especially in Japan, and also experimentation with different materials in the actual construction of the disc itself.

And as I have discovered since I started listening to networked music, the old mantra that ‘digits is digits, and bits is bits’ just doesn’t hold water: one can make all kinds of changes to a system, and all of them make a difference. They may not all improve the sound, but having changed things for myself as well as taken part in informal blind listening sessions, where I knew something might have been changed but didn’t know whether it was supposed to improve the sound, I can definitely say that I have heard changes.

So by now I may have lost some readers – those of the ‘in digital, the signal is either there or it isn’t, and if it’s there it’s perfect’ persuasion – but I have to admit I have steadfastly avoided all the theory on one side or the other, and just tried it. The things I felt improved the sound, I have kept; the changes that made little difference, or changed things for the worse, I have ditched. A bit like auditioning hi-fi components, in fact.

Regular readers will have seen me experimenting with different connections – currently I am using inexpensive fibre network converters to isolate my music playback servers and players from interference on the network, which I feel make a bigger difference than, say, investing in exotic Ethernet cables. And



Everything in computer audio can be tweaked – even this used Cisco network switch

on the same subject I do tend to stick to wired networking for all my music-playing hardware, rather than Wi-Fi, though in this case it’s not because it sounds better, but simply for stability.

I have to say I am enjoying making these changes and hearing the way the sound alters, albeit subtly

All my network hardware, from NAS server boxes to Ethernet network switches, runs on linear power supplies rather than the electrically noisy switch-mode devices supplied as standard. Then, to keep the network robust, the ‘hub’ wireless device supplied by my internet provider runs only as a modem, with the Wi-Fi being handled by an external router, and simple switchboxes replacing the multiple outputs on the hub. One cable goes from the hub to the wireless router, from which a single cable connects to the network switches.

Ah yes, network switches: who knew they could make a difference to the sound? Having long used Netgear switches – the little blue metal cased ones – to provide the network connectivity, and having experimented with a large Cisco multiport switch of the kind you find in office and industrial switchrooms I bought secondhand (which was good, but its built-in fan too noisy), I am now using a smaller Cisco, bought on a tip-off from an internet forum.


It cost no more than one of the Netgear switches – around £50, used – and after installing it I am confident there’s just a

shade more clarity and presence to the sound through my Naim network player, and a number of other network-connected devices I have used.

But then I tried standing the switch on some decoupling feet, which I knew wouldn’t make any difference at all – I mean, why would it? It did, despite my expectations, and so did taking the thing apart and damping the casework with some thin rubber self-adhesive sheet of the kind used for soundproofing in vans, as did swapping out the supplied mains lead for one of Naim’s decoupled Power-Line Lite cables. Every time, although I knew I wouldn’t hear a difference, and was just doing this for the sake of experimentation, the sound changed.

Next is going to be some way of decoupling the Ethernet sockets themselves: I’ve already fitted the switch with a slot-in fibre optic card, thus replacing my existing fibre converter: one less box, one less source of interference.

And that’s what I think is at the heart of these changes – or at least as far as I can rationalise what I’m hearing. No, all this tuning isn’t getting more bits of data, or better bits of data, through the wire – that would be silly – but instead removing sources of electrical noise and interference being transmitted to the audio device at the end of the chain.

Yes, all this experimentation may suggest the old saying ‘this way madness lies’, but I have to say I am enjoying making these changes and hearing the way the sound alters, albeit subtly. And there was me thinking digital audio meant tinkering was a thing of the past ... 



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NOTES & LETTERS

Discovering Lyatoshinsky in Poland • Mahler's influences • Jascha Horenstein's Nielsen

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Lyatoshinsky in Wrocław

Thanks to January's issue of *Gramophone* (to buy a copy of which necessitated a major trek around the Polish city of Wrocław in -10C temperatures!), I was pleased to discover an amazing piece of music under the baton of Kirill Karabits (page 42). It is the Symphony No 3 by Lyatoshinsky played by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. And it was the second movement in particular that made a special impact. I asked my Ukrainian friend about this work and was astonished to find out she was unaware of it. I encouraged her to have a listen with me: her reaction was priceless. The tears in her eyes spoke volumes. It made me realise how easily we can all learn from each other. In this case a Ukrainian speaker learned from a Polish speaker about a Ukrainian composer. How cool is that?

Maksymilian Ceron
Wrocław, Poland

Mahler and Schumann

The precedents for Mahler's Sixth Symphony suggested by Peter Quantrill ('What next?', February, page 82) mysteriously ignore the music Mahler himself frequently refers to in the work, Schumann's *Manfred* Overture, from which the opening of the first movement and the constantly developing theme first stated at bars 29-31 of the first movement which later becomes the foundation of the introduction to the finale are self-evidently cribbed. These are not the only thematic coincidences. Mahler, of course, re-orchestrated Schumann's overture, and would certainly have known Byron's drama.

I've never yet come across any discussion of these links, and I've been wondering for years whether my ears are misleading me. What must have been going on in his mind?

JS Brennan
Via email

Horenstein's Nielsen

I am astonished one of the finest recordings of Nielsen's Fifth Symphony (Collection, February, page 108) has slipped the net of your reviewer. I refer to the recording made by Jascha Horenstein on the Unicorn-Kanchana label. If ever

Letter of the Month



Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* in Opera North's striking, and critically acclaimed, staging

Aspiring to an ideal in Wagner

Edward Seckerson is spot on in the March issue (page 15) when he says that the ideal *Ring* is in the mind! But it gets there from the vast amount of information, staged and semi-staged performances, not to say videos and sound recordings, available to us. I was fortunate as a student in the 1970s to be introduced to the *Ring* by the still seminal Reginald Goodall *Ring* in that fantastic English translation and the vital singing of Rita Hunter and Alberto Remedios – in the days when the English National Opera toured!

An array of LPs, CDs and DVDs followed – from Furtwängler in Rome in 1950 through Keilberth, Solti, Karajan and others, including the centenary Chéreau production, leading up to the outstanding Opera North production (who needs the ENO?).

Sitting in the theatre one almost became the character being sung to!

As Milton reminds us, the mind is it's own place and of itself can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven. The orchestral music which brings *Götterdämmerung* to a close is certainly redemptive. But are the action on stage and those closing words equally so? All are dead or dying as Hunding cries 'keep away from the ring'. Only the Rhinemaidens and Alberich remain. Perhaps, we have not come to the close of a journey. The characteristic of any ring is its circularity. Maybe Wagner's great music drama is equally circular – Alberich always ready to get down with the Maidens and start the journey again time after time. Redemption awaits!

Stuart Edwards
Morecambe, Lancs

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there was a classic recording this has to be it. Nor was mention made of the excellent recording made by Jukka-Pekka Saraste, another serious omission. Why I wonder?
Edward Clark
President, United Kingdom Sibelius Society

DJF replies Both Horenstein recordings were mentioned in my Collection (though neither appears to be currently available on CD), but Saraste (also not available) looks like my omission – for which apologies.

OBITUARIES

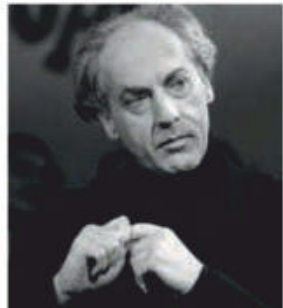
Three major organists, two fine sopranos and one of London's best-loved record retailers

JEAN GUILLOU

Organist, pianist and composer

Born April 18, 1930

Died January 26, 2019



Born in Angers in the Pays de la Loire, Guillou studied both the piano and organ, becoming organist of the church of St Serge in his home town at the age of 12.

He later studied with Dupré, Messiaen and Duruflé at the Paris Conservatoire. He moved to Lisbon to teach and then to Berlin for five years where he composed before returning to the French capital in 1963 as Titulaire of St Eustache. He remained in the role (later taking on an emeritus title) for 52 years.

Guillou was a man of wide culture with interests that included Asian music, Nô theatre, whale song and mime (he worked with Marcel Marceau). In the great French tradition, Guillou was a fine improviser as well as a composer of a substantial body of work for orchestral and chamber forces as well as for organ. He also left a large number of transcriptions (including of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* and Stravinsky's Three Pieces from *Petrushka*). Jean Guillou's organ works are being recorded for MDG by Zuzana Ferjenčíková (Vol 1 is released this month).

As a recording artist Guillou made discs for Philips (including Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony* with the San Francisco SO and Edo de Waart), Decca, Dorian and Augure, among others.

PETER HURFORD

Organist, composer and choirmaster

Born November 22, 1930

Died March 3, 2019



Best known to record collectors for his superb series for Decca of the complete organ works of JS Bach, Peter Hurford has died at the age of 88.

After school at Blundell's in Devon, Hurford studied with Harold Drake before reading music and law at Cambridge before opting for music and working in Paris with André Marchal

who introduced Hurford to the riches of French organ music. In 1956 he took up the post of organist at Holy Trinity, Leamington Spa; he also taught music at Bablake School in Coventry. In 1958 he moved to St Albans where he served as organist and choirmaster for 20 years. During his time in the city, he also established an organ competition, inspired by the installation of a new Harrison & Harrison organ designed by himself and Ralph Downes. The competition, which blossomed into the St Albans International Organ Festival, honoured some now major names in the organ world, players like Gillian Weir, David Sanger, Thomas Trotter, Kevin Bowyer and, in the improvisation category, André Isoir, Naji Hakim, David Briggs and Martin Baker.

Hurford recorded extensively, mainly for Decca, and his discography included a fine set of Handel's Organ Concertos Op 7 made with the Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra and Joshua Rifkin ('Hurford's playing is regular and vigorous, matching the full-blooded pounce of Rifkin's direction, all as fresh as a new-laid egg' as Gordon Reynolds put it inimitably in November 1986) as well as Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony* and Poulenc's *Organ Concerto* with the Montreal SO and Charles Dutoit. Volume 3 of his complete Bach won *Gramophone's* Instrumental Award in 1979.

He wrote a book, *Making Music on the Organ* (OUP: 1998) and also composed much liturgical music, including *Litany for the Holy Spirit*, his most-performed work.

WILMA LIPP

Soprano

Born April 26, 1925

Died January 26, 2019



The Austrian soprano, who has died at the age of 93, was one of the great exponents of the role of the Queen of the Night in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, a part she sang on stage on more than 400 occasions and recorded six times. After study in Vienna and Milan (with Toti Dal Monte), she made her debut in Vienna as Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) in 1943 and, in 1945, joined the company of the

Staatsoper for whom she sang over 1200 performances over 40 years.

Her pure, crystalline soprano was perfectly suited to soubrette and lyric roles and her repertoire embraced Mozartian characters like Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), Konstanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), the Figaro Countess and Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*) as well as Richard Strauss's Zerbinetta, Offenbach's Olympia, Wagner's Eva, Verdi's Violetta and many operetta roles.

Apart from her *Magic Flute* recordings, Lipp can be heard on record in, among others, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (with Josef Krips), in the Mozart Requiem (Herbert von Karajan and Jascha Horenstein), *Die Fledermaus* (Otto Ackermann and Clemens Krauss) and Beethoven's Ninth (Horenstein).

HAROLD MOORES

Record retailer

Born June 23, 1941

Died December 31, 2018



Harold Moores, who gave his name to one of London's most-visited record stores, died at the age of 77 surrounded by his loving family and nearly 9000 LPs.

Born in New Zealand, he studied at Auckland University where he gained an MA in history; there he also met his English wife-to-be Brenda who survives him after 60 years of marriage. After spending time in North Carolina on a scholarship and travelling in the US, the couple came to the UK, and Harold, tired of academe, followed his other love, classical music and managed Henry Staves record shop on Dean Street in London. He then, with Philip Thwaites, opened his first shop in Great Russell Street before moving it in the late 1970s to Great Malborough Street, making it – until he sold the business in 2004 – a must-visit destination for record collectors embracing everyone from students and enthusiastic amateurs to world-famous conductors and singers. One of his patrons, Vikram Seth, featured Harold Moores's shop in his novel *An Equal Music*.

Harold had an encyclopedic knowledge of recorded music, and a great memory for numbers, and he would look out for unusual recordings for a long time,

sometimes contacting delighted people years later. Although he was a historian by training, he discovered his forte and pleasure in searching out and listening to rare records, particularly for special customers. Outside music, he was a passionate gardener and traveller.

NOEL RAWSTHORNE

Organist and composer

Born December 24, 1929

Died January 28, 2019



The British organist Noel Rawsthorne has died at the age of 89. During a long career he was closely associated with Liverpool where he served as Organist at

the city's Anglican Cathedral between 1955 and 1980. He was also a senior lecturer in music at St Katherine's College (now Liverpool Hope University). He also oversaw the restoration of the Rushworth and Dreaper organ in Liverpool's Philharmonic Hall, the home of the Royal Liverpool PO with whom he often performed. He recorded extensively for, among many labels, EMI, CRD, Abbey, Sceptre and ASV (for whom, playing the organ of Guildhall Cathedral, he joined the LPO and Enrique Bátiz in Saint-Saëns's *Organ Symphony*).

Stanley Webb, reviewing a Polydor recital in *Gramophone* in August 1976, recalled sitting in the organ loft as Rawsthorne improvised on an Advent chorale 'with the melody picked out phrase by phrase on the bombarde reeds against elaborate figuration on the Great manual. The total effect was overwhelming and seemed likely to induce a tidal wave on the Mersey. One was dazzled – as on this record – by Rawsthorne's extraordinary fluency and by his unerring judgement in choosing pieces which bring out every facet of this huge instrument, which he has known inside out since he was 19.'

JOSÉ CARLOS DE SEQUEIRA COSTA

Pianist

Born July 18, 1929

Died February 21, 2019



The Portuguese pianist Sequeira Costa has died in Kansas at the age of 89. Born in Angola, he moved to Lisbon as a exceptionally gifted eight-year-old

to study with José Vianna da Motta, himself a pupil of Liszt. He later studied with Mark Hambourg, Marguerite Long and Edwin Fischer. In 1976 he took up the position of Professor of Piano at the University of Kansas; the nine-year-old Artur Pizarro, who had been studying with Sequeira Costa since he was five, followed him to Kansas to continue his studies.

Sequeira Costa recorded widely, most prominently in Romantic repertoire as well as Beethoven (including the 32 piano sonatas for Claudio). He served on the juries of many prestigious competitions, including the Tchaikovsky (seven times, including the inaugural competition in 1958 at the invitation of Shostakovich) and the Chopin (1960 and 2000).

HILDE ZADEK

Soprano

Born December 15, 1917

Died February 21, 2019



The German soprano Hilde Zadek has died at the age of 101. Born in Bromberg, then part of Germany (but since 1919 the Polish city of Bydgoszcz), Zadek

grew up in Stettin but in 1934, as a Jew, she and her family emigrated to Palestine. In 1945 she returned to Europe and studied singing with Ria Ginster in Zurich, making her stage debut two years later as Aida at the Vienna State Opera, a company she worked with until 1971. She later settled in the city.

Her early roles included Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (a part she recorded under Rudolf Moralt, now on Decca Eloquence, and which also provided her Met debut in 1952), Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito*, Richard Strauss's Ariadne (which she recorded under Joseph Keilberth), and, in Wagner, Elsa in *Lohengrin* and Eva in *Die Meistersinger*. She also sang in the world premiere of Orff's *Antigonae*, in Menotti's *The Consul* in 1950 and Frank Martin's *Le vin herbé* in 1948 under Ferenc Fricsay (now available on Orfeo).

She appeared at Covent Garden, Glyndebourne, La Scala, the Paris Opéra, the Bolshoi, San Francisco Opera and at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Her recordings, many off-air, include the Verdi Requiem under Karajan, J Strauss II's *Der Zigeunerbaron* under Clemens Krauss, Richard Strauss's *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*, and Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

NEXT MONTH
MAY 2019



Meeting Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla

As she releases her first album for DG, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's Music Director talks about the work of Mieczysław Weinberg

The Sixteen at 40

As one of today's most admired choral groups, famed for their annual Choral Pilgrimage tours, marks four decades, founder and Director Harry Christophers tells us about their anniversary plans

Nielsen's Violin Concerto

Andrew Mellor chooses his favourite recordings of a work he feels powerfully reflects the composer's personality

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Bach, JS Wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 1. <i>Devine.</i>	🇩 ② RES10239
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Brahms Orch Wks (r1950-62). <i>Anda/Giesecking/SWF Orch, Baden-Baden/Rosbaud.</i>	🇩 ⑥ ③ SWR19069
Dvořák Sym No 9. Carnival Ov (r2006). <i>SWR RSO, Stuttgart/Norrington.</i>	🇩 ③ SWR19515
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Orff Carmina Burana (r2010). <i>SWR Voc Ens/Huber.</i>	🇩 ③ SWR19516
Various Cpsrs Pf Wks (pp1960). <i>François.</i>	🇫 SWR19060
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Putignano Org Wks. <i>Peretti.</i>	🇫 TC961602
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


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Marc Voinchet

The Director of France Musique on his lifelong love affair with broadcasting and radio, and trying to rein in his eclectic musical tastes

My three passions are Scarlatti, Snoop Dogg and Sinatra because they all swing in their own way! I often get laughed at as a controller of music because my personal passion for a project can drive me on, but I occasionally need to stand back and be more objective. But then I've never really believed in putting barriers around music by genre: I've always been open to all sorts of music, so jazz sits comfortably alongside classical and I'm happy to jump from one to the other. I missed out on rock and punk in my early years, so I'm catching up now. I love hip-hop and particularly Snoop Dogg who I think has real musicality. These artists know a lot about music and how to create it.

I discovered music by listening to my parents' records but also those of my grandfather – things like Beethoven's Fifth conducted by George Szell, or Maria Callas, but also The Beatles – so quite eclectic. It was through the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* that I discovered the music of Ligeti. I also remember seeing Dizzy Gillespie in concert – a really influential moment. I was mesmerised by Dizzy's cheeks which looked like they were going to explode!

I've been fascinated by radio ever since I was a little boy. My parents didn't have a television, so I was only able to listen to the radio. When I was about six or seven I was given a cassette recorder which I used to make recordings from the radio, but I also used to make little 'comic-strip' programmes, doing many of the voices myself but also roping in my parents. I used to experiment a lot.

I started in local Radio France as a reporter at about 16 when the FM frequencies became freed up and soon I was working for France Musique and France Culture as a journalist. I was a lazy student so was determined to become a journalist very soon and I learned on the job. Even today I still worry that my past is going to catch up with me, and someone's going to say 'You didn't study hard enough!'

One of the big challenges for a classical music station now is trying to give to today's listeners the same excitement and inspiration that I got when I was a youngster. It's about the passing on of a passion to get people to learn and enjoy. Another challenge is that classical music is a niche subject and suffers from a lot of clichés and prejudices that may be our own fault. We have to try to overturn these clichés but also use technology to go after listeners who wouldn't normally listen to classical music, and broaden their musical horizons by allowing access to classical music.

It's important for us to make classical music as real as possible so it's not this intangible, mysterious thing.



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Another powerful force is that the younger generation of classical musicians are much more broadminded, musically, than earlier generations, and these are people that audiences can relate to. So, for example, the pianist Bertrand Chamayou is a huge fan of Prince and knows an enormous amount about his music. I had lunch with him and he seemed very sad, so I asked him what the matter was and he said 'Prince has died. That's an entire part of my childhood gone!' Sadly it was too late but I'd have loved to have made a tribute to Prince with Bertrand.

There was a time when people threw up a kind of enclosure around classical music so artists didn't talk about their passions for other sorts of music. We need to take off the blinkers and embrace the fact that classical musicians often know a lot about much more than classical music. **G**

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After the double album of the Violin and Harpsichord Sonatas with Kristian Bezuidenhout, a bestseller in 2018, here is the next instalment in a Bach recording adventure that began nine years ago with a set of the Sonatas and Partitas now regarded as a benchmark. Isabelle Faust, Bernhard Forck and his partners at the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin have explored a multitude of other works by Bach: harpsichord concertos, trio sonatas for organ, instrumental movements from sacred cantatas etc. All are revealed here as direct or indirect relatives of the three monumental Concertos BWV 1041-43. This fascinating achievement is a timely reminder that the master of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* was also a virtuoso violinist!